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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
ON
Several SUBJECTS:
BEING
Some Select Homilies
OF THE
Church of *England*,

Put into a New Method and
Modern Stile;
And fitted to Common Use.

VOL. I. & II.

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TO THE
QUEEN.

MA D A M,

TH E Homilies of the Church of *England* being very much grown into Disuse, by reason of the Prejudices that are against them for their Stile and manner of Composition, so different from that of the Age we live in; I have endeavour'd to rescue some of the most Practical of them from the Disadvantages they lie under, by reducing them, as near as I could in Method and

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Ex-

The *Dedication.*
Expression, to our Modern way
of Preaching.

As Your Majesty's known Zeal
for the Establish'd Religion, and
the just Esteem You have for
every Part of its Constitution,
made me presume to Address them
to Your Royal Patronage ; so the
Doctrine they contain, has a right
to Your Protection, as You are
Supreme Head of this Church,
and Defender of the Faith ; And
nothing would conduce more to
the Happiness of Your People,
than to have it inculcated in such
a manner as to be favourably re-
ceiv'd by them.

For our Church proposes no-
thing to be believed but what is
expres'd in Scripture, or clearly
deduc'd from it : And as for the
Duties she explains or exhorts us
to,

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to, they are of the greatest Importance in the Christian Life : Some of them most nearly concern the Safety of Princes and the Publick Tranquillity ; particularly in the Homily of Obedience to Magistrates, our Duty is laid upon its true Foundation, which is that of Conscience ; and the Submission that is required of Subjects was in that Age thought well grounded upon Scripture, and upon the Essential Rules and Maxims of our Government.

Whatever dangerous Consequences are charged upon this Doctrine of our First Reformers, no Censure can pass upon it but what will equally reflect upon our Laws : Treason and Rebellion are as much detested by them as they are by our Religion ; by the one they are punished

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nished with the severest kinds of Temporal Death, as by the other they are bound over to Eternal Damnation.

The Sacred Rights of Sovereignty are in our Constitution so well temper'd with the Rights and Liberties of the People, that they are to each other a mutual Defence and Support ; and these are so intirely preserv'd by Your Majesty, as may convince the World, that they can never be more safely trusted than with a Prince of the *Church of England.*

As it is the Glory of our Church to have so bright an Example form'd upon her Rules and Principles, and in a constant regular Use of her Holy Offices, the Divine Grace is so plentifully derived upon You : May this be

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a Means to reconcile her Adversaries to embrace the same Communion, which they see is so effectual to *make the Christian perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good Work.*

After all the Blessings Your Majesty has procur'd for Your People, 'tis in themselves to complete their Happiness, would they lay aside unreasonable Prejudices, *and walk in the House of God as Friends*: May this be added to the other Glorious Successes of Your Reign. And may the Almighty hear the Prayers of our Church, and reward Your Piety and Bounty towards her, with full Returns of those Petitions, which she incessantly offers up for Your Increase in Honour and Happiness in this World, and for Your Late, but Sure Possession

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sion of Eternal Glory in the
World to come ; In which no
One joyns with more sincere De-
votion, than

Your MAJESTY'S

Most Faithful,

Most Devoted, and

Most Obedient Subject,

and Servant,

P. Nourse.

THE

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TIS now so long since the Compiling the Book of *Homilies*, that it is no wonder the People should be so generally prejudiced as we find they are against them.

When they are read in our Churches upon such Times as the *Rubrick* directs, and in such a Manner as is enjoin'd by the *Canons*, without *adding* Canon to or *glossing upon them*, 'tis easie to perceive a great Coldness and Uneasiness in the Congregation, and there are very few who give that Reverence and Attention which is due to

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the Authority of such Discourses.

The Cause of this general Aversion to them, is to be ascribed in a great Measure to the Alteration which has been made in our Language since the Times they were writ in; not only the Words, but the manner of Expression, and all the Way and Method of Preaching, is very different now from what it was in that Age, and there having been a new Translation of the Bible since those Times, the Scriptures themselves, which in our Homilies are quoted from the former Version, must needs sound harsh and uncouth to those who are accustom'd only to the new One.

There is one thing to be observ'd as to the Subjects upon which

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which our *Homilies* are written, that they are neither so many, nor all of them so well chos'en as they might be for the Use and Necessities of the present Age; the Thirty Fifth Article of our Church says very rightly of them all, *That they contain a Doctrine necessary for those Times in which they were written*, which being in the Reign of *Edward the Sixth*, (for then the First Book of *Homilies* was set forth, and the Second Book was supposed to be penn'd) the Church has other sort of Enemies to contend with now, than it had at that Time.

Our Controversies then were almost wholly against the Church of *Rome*, whose Yoak we had just shaken off; but now we are infested on all

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Sides, not only with the *Papists*, but with those likewise who strike at the very Foundations of *Christianity* it self; one may safely affirm it, That there is not now so much Peril of *Idolatry* amongst us, as there is of *Atheism*, *Deism*, or *Socinianism*. We have also innumerable Sects that are Enemies either to the Doctrine or Discipline of our Church, one of which sprung up within the Memory of Man, and now increas'd or supported by incredible Numbers, is it self a Complex of almost all the ancient Errors and Heresies.

As therefore in the *beginning of the Reformation*, it was very proper and seasonable to compose *Homilies* upon the several Points that were then in Controversie between us and the

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the Church of *Rome*, that so the People might see what just Reason we had to depart from that Communion, so in these Times we now live in, there are other Subjects no less useful and necessary, in order to expose and refute the Errors of our several later Adversaries, and to prevent the growing Mischiefs of those Divisions, which were too apparently begun amongst us, and have been all along fomented by the Emissaries of the Roman See : These finding themselves to be an unequal Match for those of the *Reformation* in the Way of Writing and Disputing, were resolved to break them in Pieces by Discord and Animosities.

It were therefore to be wished that the Book of *Homilies* were revised by Authority, that

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proper Alterations, might be made, and such new Ones added, as might best suit the Circumstances and Occasions of the present Times, it would certainly be very proper to have one upon the Subject of *Schism*, and another against *Hypocrisie*, the crying and prevailing Sins of the Age we live in, from which the Safety of the *Church of England* seems to be more endanger'd, than from any Mischiefs we need fear from other Quarters.

As for the *Homilies* that are written expressly against the *Church of Rome*, they do indeed sufficiently discover the Errors and Corruptions of that Church, and the Arguments they produce, have Weight and Strength enough to convince any reasonable Man of the Necessity

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cessity of forsaking her Communion, yet it cannot be deny'd, that even these are capable of being improved to much greater Advantages; for though the Corruptions of that Church are the same, or rather greater and more establish'd than they were in the Reign of *Edward* the Sixth, yet the State of the Controversie between them and us, is both very much changed since that Time, and has been managed on both Sides with greater Strength and Closeness of Reasoning. (Witness the severall Learned Tracts that were Written in the Reign of *King James II.*) so that there is no doubt, but that a Summary Collection of the best Arguments that have been made use of by our later Writers against *the Church of Rome*, would

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would give much greater Satisfaction to our People, to secure them from returning to her Communion, than any thing that was written in the beginning of the *Reformation*.

But I know it is commonly said, That to make any such Alterations or Improvements of our *Homilies*, as it might draw ill Consequences after it, so 'tis altogether a *needless Work*, the End being now ceas'd for which they were at first compos'd and publish'd, they were design'd to supply the Defect of good Preaching, which was too notorious at the Beginning of the *Reformation*, the Church was then just recovering her self out of the dark Mists of *Popish Ignorance*, which it had been overspread with for many Ages, the Clergy

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Clergy, who were to instruct others, did very much want to be instructed themselves in the most necessary Points of Doctrine revealed in the Gospel; but now the Case is quite altered, there is great Plenty of good Preachers in all Places, and many excellent Volumes of Sermons are daily publish'd, which may serve for as good Helps to those who have not the Skill or Talent of Preaching, as any that should be set forth by Authority.

But this Argument rather proves, that there is no need of any *Homilies* at all, than that we should not have a Book of them more perfect, and more adapted to the Uses of the present Age. 'Tis plain, that both Parts of the *Homilies* are not so compleat, as was design'd

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sign'd at the first Composing them; for at the end of the first Part there follows a Promise, That there should be more Sermons added upon several Subjects, which were never yet extant among them, as *against Covetousness, Envy, Ire, and Malice, with many other Matters, as well fruitful as necessary to the edifying of Christian People, and the increase of Godly Living.*

Let it therefore be granted that the present Age excells in good Preaching any that have been before it, and that there are Ministers now-a-days who are able enough to compose Sermons for themselves upon any of those profitable Subjects that are not treated of in our *Homilies*, yet this is not universally true of all, or of a great

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a great Part of them: Were it so, there would hardly be so much Encouragement as there is for Printing every Year so many Volumes of new Sermons.

There are many Churches in *England* and *Wales* very meanly provided for with Preachers, by Reason of the small Encouragement there is of Allowance for supplying those Cures. This Mischief we hope will in Time be redress'd in a great Measure, by the late unparallel'd Benefaction of our Most Gracious Queen: But for those Benefices that have a plentiful and honourable Maintenance belonging to them, if we could suppose that they always fell to the Lot of worthy Men, yet 'tis most certain that Men may be Eminent

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in some Parts of *Theological Learning*, and yet be deficient in the Art of Preaching, at least their Cures may happen to be served by those that are so : To Preach well, not only requires a good Stock of Divinity, and of other useful Knowledge, but there must also be a natural Genius to accommodate sound Notions to the Apprehensions of the Vulgar, and so to insinuate into their Affections, as to move and perswade them to embrace Truth, and to be in love with their Duty ; for which Reason the Discourses of some Learned Men, as well as of the ignorant, are observed to be of very little Use for the *Edification* of the People.

Where Men therefore are either under a Necessity of making

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king use of other Mens Works, or where it is expedient they should do so rather than of their own, 'tis certainly much safer for the Church, as well as more creditable for themselves, that they were supply'd by *Authority*, than that they should be at Liberty to make their own Choice: *Homilies* are a *Standard* of sound Doctrine, and a Man needs not be ashame'd to read what is prepar'd and enjoin'd by our *Ecclesiastical Governours*; but where a Clergyman is once found out by his *Parishioners* to have preached to them the Sermons of any other Man, how Celebrated soever, he is usually as much ashame'd of it himself, and is under as great Disgrace with his Flock, as if he had been guilty of some notorious Theft,

or

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or had really put the Cheat upon them.

I might add upon this Head, that even some of the best and ablest Preachers, who would disdain to repeat in their Pulpits the Works of any private Author, and who are very diligent in composing for their own Use, are yet so often hinder'd in their Studies by Bodily Indispositions, or by their necessary Attendance upon other Parts of their Cure, or they have so little Time for making Sermons, through the too frequent Returns of that Duty upon them, that they would be willing enough to rehearse to their People a good Practical Discourse set forth by Authority ; nay, they would be glad to be sometimes so usefully and so honourably reliev'd.

But

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But are not the *Homilies* we have at present very fit for that purpose? 'Tis certain they were so at the Time when they were written; it is suppos'd Bishop *Juel* had a hand in composing them, and though the rest of the Authors are not known, yet it is generally allow'd, that they were some of the most Eminent Preachers of that Age; they are many of them upon the most useful Subjects, and equal any thing that has been since written upon the same, both for sound Reasoning and proper Topsicks of Perswasion; one may with a little Pains discover in many of them, a rich Vein of good Sense, Learning, and Piety, but all this lies under so great Disadvantages of Language and Method, that the People are not easily reconcil'd to them, they

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would be apt to think very hardly of their Pastor, if (as it is allow'd by our *Rubrick, Articles and Canons*) he should now and then give them a *Homily* instead of a *Sermon*.

But to shew that their Prejudices are not so well grounded as they imagine they are, I have endeavour'd in the following Discourses, to recover some of those *Homilies* that are upon the most useful and most practical Subjects, from such Defects and Imperfections as are incidental to their Antiquity ; a great deference ought to be pay'd to them, as they are the First Fruits of the Reformation, the most ancient Remains we have of the Principles and Doctrines of those worthy *Martyrs*, who laid down their Lives for the Establishment of our Church, and

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and if they are found in the new Dress they appear in, to contain as good Rules and Directions for Holy Living, as any modern Composures of the same kind, it is to be hoped that Men who are convinc'd of this, will have a more favourable Opinion of the authentick *Homilies* themselves, and by their grave and serious Deportment at the reading of them in our Churches, they will induce others to be the more attentive to them, that so in Time it may come to be a Reflection upon the Understanding of the Hearers, and not upon the *Homilies*, if they do not meet with that Respect and Veneration which is justly due to them.

I am very sensible, that were there more or greater Blemishes than are to be found in them, yet as they are ratify'd and

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confirm'd by the Authority of our Church, they must stand as they are till the same Authority thinks fit to alter them, we are forbidden (as I hinted before) by the 49th Canon, *to add to or gloss upon them*, but this is meant only when we read them *in Publick*, otherwise as for *private Use*, I see no Reason why we may not take the same Liberty with them as others have done with our *Articles and Liturgy*, of paraphrasing or enlarging, or using any other such Ways and Methods as may make them better understood by the People, and more serviceable to their ~~Edification~~ in Faith and Holiness: This being the only Design of the following Discourses, I shall trouble the Reader with no farther Apology for them.

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*In the Author's Absence, some Mis-spellings have escaped the
Corrector's Care, which the Reader is desired to
Amend, viz.*

P age 24. Line penult, read *Canaan.* p. 27. dele *not.* p. 73. l. 17. dele *at.* p. 80. l. 14. read *Wickedness.* p. 115. l. 19. read *ne-
cessary.* p. 116. l. 10. read *Subfidence.* p. 140. l. 26. insert a
Comma after *Poverty*, and dele the Point after *Drowsiness.* p. 152.
l. 15. read *forbad.* p. 153. l. 1. read *Building.* p. 163. l. 20.
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DIS.

Practical Discourses
ON
Several Subjects.

DISCOURSE I.
Of PRAYER.

EPH. vi. 18.

Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance.

PRAYER is a Duty of that great Concern to a Christian, that we cannot be too often admonish'd of its Necessity and Advantages, nor too earnestly press'd to a zealous

DISCOURSE I.

Ious and devout Exercise of it. 'Tis the Condition or Means which God has appointed for procuring those Blessings which he has promised to bestow upon his Servants. *Every good gift and every perfect gift, (as St. James tells us) cometh from above, and proceedeth from the Father of Lights.* There is no natural Excellence or Perfection in us, but was derived from God, there is not any thing that is needful to support our Life, or make it more easie and comfortable to us, neither is there any Grace or Virtue but must come from him, and tho' he can bestow those things upon us, and very often does so without our asking, yet for his own Glory, and our greater Benefit, he has appointed Prayer as the ordinary Means of conveying them to us, for by praying to him, we humbly acknowledge our Dependance upon him, we own him to be the Author and Giver of all good things, and consequently we are made sensible of the Duties that are owing to him, we are taught to trust in him, to fear and love him, and continually to offer up Praises and Thanksgivings, for his Bounty towards us.

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Of PRAYER.

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The Honour of God as well as our own Interest being thus highly promoted by Prayer, Men are not to think they are left at Liberty whether they will use it or no, for God does expressly require it as a Duty from them; therefore our Saviour not only prescrib'd a Form of Prayer to his Disciples, but he frequently calls them to the Exercise of this Duty, in these words, *Watch and Pray*; which imply that it must be perform'd with Fervour and Constancy, and what he exhorted his Disciples to, was no more than what he practised himself. He prayed with that Earnestness before his Passion, that the Evangelist tells us, *His Sweat was as great Drops of Blood* Luk. xxii. 44. falling down to the Ground. St. Paul bids the *Thessalonians Pray without ceasing*; 1 Ep. v. and in the Text we are taught to pray 17. *always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto, with all Perseverance.*

But notwithstanding so many positive Commands in Scripture, some Men are apt to object, that there is no need of Prayer, because God's Knowledge is infinite, he knoweth our Necessities before we ask, he is also so gracious and bountiful, that he giveth to all Men liberally

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berally of his own accord, and needeth not to be ask't for such things as he sees are fitting for us.

Indeed, if to inform Almighty God of our Wants, were the end of Prayer, it would be a vain and superfluous Office, no one Addresses any Petition to him, but upon this firm Belief, that he is every where present, and knoweth all things. And this very Persuasion that he is privy to our Wants, is a great Encouragement to lay them before him: When Men petition an earthly Prince, great Pains and Interest must be used to give him a true understanding of their Case, for want of which, many are disappointed of that Relief they might otherwise have expected from him: But when we pray to the God of Heaven and Earth, his Omiscience is our Security, that no Prejudice or Mistake, can hinder our Success. We pray to him therefore, not with a design to instruct his Understanding which is Infinite, but to move his Will that he wou'd vouchsafe to grant us a Supply of our Wants, or a Deliverance out of those Troubles and Afflictions which could not have happen'd to us, without his Knowledge and particular Appointment. And as for

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for the Beneficence and Liberality of God, his Readiness to do good to the Sons of Men, it appears sufficiently in this, that he has ordain'd so easie a Condition as that of Prayer, for the obtaining any Favours from him; he requires no costly Sacrifices, no laborious Services, no servile Attendances from us. It is but *Ask and it shall be given you, seek* Mat. 7. 7. *and ye shall find, knock and it shall be open'd unto you.* Does any one lack *Wisdom, ask it of God* (says St. James) Chap. 1. 5. *it shall be given him.* Does any Man lie under Affliction, God himself shews him the way how to be eased of it. *Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will* Psal. 50. 15. *deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

In vain therefore is either the Infinite Knowledge or Goodnes of God brought in as Objections against the Necessity of Prayer. They are indeed the strongest Reasons and Encouragements for the Exercise of it.

Since then it appears to be a necessary Duty, grounded upon the express Will and Command of God; in the following Discourse upon it, I shall consider these Three things.

I. *Whether our Prayers are to be offer'd immediately to God himself, or whe-*

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ther

DISCOURSE I.

ther they are first to be directed to any other Beings inferiour to him.

II. What should be the Subject of our Prayers, what Things or Persons we are to pray for.

III. And then I shall shew in the last place, what Power and Efficacy there is in Prayer, when it is used as it ought to be.

I. I shall inquire Whether our Prayers are to be offer'd up immediately to God himself, or whether they are first to be directed to any other Beings inferiour to him.

Joh. 16.
23.

Our Saviour Christ, who hath given us so many Precepts concerning this Duty, and so earnestly exhorts us to the Practice of it, sends us with our Petitions directly to God himself. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* And in that most perfect Form of Prayer which He prescrib'd to us, we are taught to address our selves to *our Father which is in Heaven.*

psal. 50.

jo. 2. 32.

And this is no other than what God invites us to do, in those words of *David, Call upon me in the time of trouble.* And the Prophet *Joel assures us, Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be deliver'd.*

But

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But there is an Opinion which prevails in a great part of the Christian World, which under the Pretence of paying greater Reverence to Almighty God, does actually rob him of his true Honour, the Worship of Invocation; and deprives Men of the best Right and Privilege which belongs to them, that of immediate Application to the Throne of Grace, to present their Supplications and Requests to him, who alone is able to relieve them.

The Church of *Rome* requires of her Members to offer up their Prayers to Saints and Angels, that through their Mediation, they may be the more decently and more effectually presented to our Heavenly Father. The best Argument they produce for defence of this Doctrin, is only a Simile or Resemblance of the Court of Heaven, to that of an earthly Prince; whom no inferior Subject must presume to approach with any Petition, be it never so reasonable, till some Officer of State, or great Man about the Prince, is pleased to introduce him and speak in his Behalf. 'Shall then a wretched Sinner, one whom 'the Vengeance of God is ready to fall 'upon, shall such a one dare to intrude

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into

DISCOURSE I.

into the Presence of God, and trouble him with a Representation of his Wants or trivial Concerns? Is not the distance between God and his Creatures, infinitely greater and more awful, than that of an earthly Prince above his meanest Vassals?

This Argument of theirs was long since fully answer'd by one of the Fathers of the Church, the difference in the parts of the Comparison, immediately shews the Weakness and Falsehood of it. For tho' it looks like State in the Prince, and a great Awe which his Subjects have for him, that no Petitioner has immediate Access to his Presence, yet the true reason is, that Princes are liable to mistake, and may easily be impos'd upon, their Eyes cannot be every where in all parts of their Dominions, neither can they see into Mens Artifices and Secret Designs, they chuse therefore those to be about them, whose Faithfulness, Integrity and Prudence, they think they can safely depend upon; who have better Opportunities of inquiring into, and informing themselves of particular Matters, than the Majesty and necessary Reservedness of Princes will allow them to have: 'Tis therefore fitting that all Requests

St. Ambrose

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quests should first pass through their Hands, before they have Admittance to the Throne it self. But it is quite otherwise in the Court of Heaven, God knoweth all things, and needs no Information from the Blessed Spirits that are about him, neither is it possible for us to make any Friend there, who loves us better, or can be more inclin'd to do us good, than God himself is. His Care extends to the meanest of his Creatures, there is no fear then that he should despise or forget us, he has made our Concerns to be his own, for our Happiness and Salvation, are his Glory.

Heaven is indeed at a great distance from us, but what says the Psalmist ?

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

And St. Paul tells us to our Comfort, *In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.* And again, *Through him we have an Access by the Spirit, unto the Father.* What need is there then to apply our selves to Saints or Angels, when through the Merits of Christ we have as free an Access, and as good a Right to approach with Boldness to the Throne of Grace, as they themselves have ?

Before Isa. 65.24.

DISCOURSE I.

fore they call (says Almighty God) I will answer, whilst they are yet speaking, I will bear.

But this way of offering up our Prayers after the manner of Supplicants, in the Courts of Princes, is not only a fruitless Labour, but 'tis also an absurd and an unlawful kind of Worship. 'Tis great Presumption for any Church whatever, to impose new ways of Worship, or to allow of any that are not commanded or warranted by Scripture.

But this of invoking Saints or Angels, has no foundation in any Precept or Example that we meet with there. 'Tis robbing God of the Honour that is due to him only, and upon that account 'tis contrary to Reason and Revelation. Prayer is the Homage of a Creature paid to his Creator, acknowledging an intire Dependance upon him, it supposes several Attributes in the Person it is presented to, which can belong to no other Being but God. We must believe him whom we call upon, to be one who hears and understands our Petitions, but how is it possible for any Being that is not every where present, to hear so many Prayers as are offer'd up at the same time in so many distant Places? Moreover Prayer is some-

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sometimes only mental, not utter'd with Speech, and that which is spoken, if the Heart goes not along with it, is not properly Prayer, but vain Babling ; and Men may formally ask for that which indeed they are not willing to receive ; But how can this be discern'd but by him who searcheth the Heart and Reins, and knoweth all things. Besides, the Person whom we pray to, we must firmly believe to be one who is able to help us to what we want, for we are oblig'd to pray in Faith, with full Assurance, without doubting. But how do we know that Saints or Angels have any Power to help us, or any greater Interest in God when they plead in our Behalf, than we our selves have ?

'Tis true, they are Just, and we are Sinners ; but God who commands and invites us to pray to him, knows that we are so ; and the Form of Prayer which Christ has prescrib'd to us, supposes that we have Trespasses which we daily pray may be forgiven us, and St. Paul assures us, That *He who is Lord* Rom. 10. *over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.* ^{12.} If any man sinneth, (saith St. John) we ¹ Ep. Joh. have an Advocate with the Father ; not a ^{2. 1.} Saint or an Angel, but *Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the Propitiation for our sins.* Christ

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Christ as he is God and Man, is the only Person that is qualified for the Office of our Mediator, he is every where present to receive all the Prayers that are offer'd up to him, and the Sufferings he endured for Sinners, give him a Right to plead in their Behalf, and he sitteth at the Right Hand of God, to make Intercession for us, and he graciously invites *the weary and the heavy laden to come unto him.* Were it not therefore expressly declared in Holy Scripture,
 1 Ep. Tim. 2. 5. that there is but *one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus,* yet who that could be sure of his Interest, would seek for any other? Even in an Earthly Court no one applys himself to inferiour Officers, who has the Prince himself for his Friend, and his Son for an Intercessor: But as God complains by Jer. 2. 13. the Prophet Jeremy, *His People are too apt to forsake him the Fountain of Living Waters, and hew out for themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water.*

'Tis true, the Saints on Earth are bound in Charity to pray for each other, and a good Man may desire his Friends to pray for him, because he knows they hear and understand him, and because God hath promised that he will

will hear them. *Pray one for another, Jam. 5.16.* says St. James, for the effectual, fervent Prayer of a righteous Man, availeth much. And without doubt, they are the Prayers of Saints upon Earth, which in the Book of Revelations, are said to be presented by the Angel before God.

Rev. 3. 8.

And tho' 'tis very probable that the Saints in Heaven wish well to their Brethren upon Earth, yet we have no ground to believe that they put up their good Wishes in Prayers to God, or that they can be any ways assisting to us, but we have reason to think, if they have any Knowledge of what passes here below, they are very much offended at their Votaries, who out of pretended Respect to them, rob God of his Worship and Honour, and if they were permitted to signify their Minds to them, it would be in the words of the Angel to St. John, *See thou do it not, Rev. 19. I am thy Fellow-Servant and of thy Brethren, worship God.*

Thus then it appears, That God is the only Person to whom we are to direct our Prayers. And Christ the only Mediatour and Intercessour, in whose Name, and through whose Merits they are to be offer'd up. *Thou that hearest Psal. 65. 2.*

Prayer,

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Prayer, says David, unto thee shall all Flesh come.

I proceed now to the Second Inquiry, What Things or Persons we are to pray for.

The Promise indeed seems to be absolute, that whatever we ask of the Father in the Name of Christ, he will give it us. But yet this Condition is necessarily imply'd, that we ask such things as are fitting for God to grant, and for us to receive of him. If we are not careful of this, 'tis no wonder if our Petitions are rejected. *Ye ask and receive not, says St. James, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your Lusts.*

One certain Qualification of Prayer is, that it be for such things only as are Just and Lawful. Should an Earthly Prince make a Promise to any of his Subjects as God has done to us, that he would never deny him any Request, it ought to be understood of reasonable Requests; and should that Subject offer up any Suit that is wicked and unrighteous, the Prince that has any Regard to Justice and true Honour, would not only give him a Denial, but dismiss him with the utmost Scorn and Indignation.

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And shall not the Judge of all the World think himself as much concern'd for Right and Equity? He that shall put up any Petition to him, that is not every way conformable to the Eternal Rules of Righteousness, can expect no other, but *that his Prayer will be turned into Sin*, and will bring down upon him the heaviest portion of God's Wrath and Vengeance. The Glory of God ought to be the chief end and aim of all the Prayers that we offer to him, and due Regard being had thereto, we may lawfully pray, and 'tis our Duty to do so, for all things that are needful to our Souls or Bodies. Only with this Difference in the Form and Manner of our Addresses, that when we pray to God for Spiritual Blessings, for the Supplies of his Grace, and the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, the Terms and Expressions of our Petitions are to be absolute, and sent up to his Heavenly Throne, with full Assurance that they shall be heard and granted. But when we pray for Temporal good things, for Health, Liberty, Food and Raiment, the Comforts or Conveniencies of Life, we submit all to his Will and Pleasure, and ask them upon no other Terms, than as he thinks they are fitting for us.

This

This Order of Praying first for Spiritual Blessings, and afterwards for Temporal, is taught us by Christ himself, in that absolute Form of Prayer which he has given us in his Gospel, wherein we pray that God would give us such a measure of his Grace, as may enable us to do his Will on Earth as sincerely, as the Saints and Angels obey it in Heaven; this we are to do before we presume to ask our daily Bread of him, for indeed we were unworthy to live, if we were not willing to obey his Will who supports us. Christ also commands us in our Petitions to give Preference to the Concern of our

Mat. 6.33. Soul, before that of the Body. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness;* when we have secured that Interest, then follows the Promise of Earthly Blessings, *they shall be added over and above unto us.*

We have an Example of this in the Old 2Chron.1. Testament. *Solomon* was commanded by God to ask some Gift of him, and he would give it him. Tho' Wealth, Honour, long Life, Victory, were great Temptations, any one of them enough to draw the Desires of a Young Prince after them, yet he prefer'd Wisdom before them all, that he might faithfully discharge

discharge his Duty in the high Station God had placed him in ; and for the good Choice he made in his Petition to God, he had what he ask't for : And moreover, all those other Temporal Blessings, were given him to that degree, that in them he exceeded all other Princes that were before or after him.

But the Mother of *Zebedees* Children, when she ask't our Saviour for her two Sons, the two chief Places in his Kingdom, met with a Repulse and a Rebuke from him : For tho' 'tis our Duty to seek and ask for God's Kingdom, yet an humble Christian would be content with the lowest Mansion in it.

Thus it is when good things are ask't out of an ill Principle and for bad Purposes ; *Simon Magus* was very desirous of the Gift of the Holy Ghost ; he would have given the Apostles Money to have confer'd it upon him, but this was out of Covetousness or Vain-Glory : He hoped to be admired, or to make great Advantages by the Miraculous Power and Operations of the Holy Spirit.

This is therefore a sure Rule for us in all our Petitions whatsoever, that we desire nothing of God but what may pro-

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mote his Glory, or is plainly consistent with it. That we ask things good in themselves, and for good Ends and Purposes.

Thus far Prayer has been consider'd, as it relates to our own Necessities, either of Body or Soul; but the Duty is more extensive than to be confin'd to our private Interests only. It reaches as far as Charity it self, which gives us a Concern in the Welfare and Interests of all Mankind: Our Saviour, who was very frequent and devout in the Exercise of this Duty, pray'd not for himself alone, but for those whom God had given him for his own Disciples especially, and for *all those who through their ward, should believe on him.* Neither did he rest there, but he pray'd for his Enemies, his most bitter and inveterate Enemies, at the very time that they were executing upon him, the utmost Act of their Rage and Cruelty. *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Joh. 17.
20.
Luk. 23.
34.

In this he left us an Example that we should follow his Steps, and pay Obedience to the Precept he had before given us. *I say unto you, love your Enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* So

Mat. 5. 44.

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So that our Prayers must keep even Pace with our Charity, and this obliges us to do good unto all Men, especially to those who are of the Household of Faith: So are we to pray for all Men; for Christians and Friends in the first place, and then for our Enemies; for those who differ from us in Interests or Opinions. For Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks; in general, for all Mankind.

St. Paul exhorts Timothy, That *Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men*, without Exception; but he gives the Preference in our Prayers, to *Kings and all that are in Authority*; to those who are capable of doing the greatest Good and Service to Mankind, in respect both of their Temporal and Eternal Interests. The Apostle does frequently desire the Prayers of the Church for himself, that he might be enabled to discharge his Ministry to their greater Benefit; and this was the Practice of the first Christians, to put up their Publick Petitions for those who watch'd for their Souls; as in the Instance of St. Peter, when he was put into Prison, *Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church, unto God for him.* Act. 12. 5.

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And good reason there is, that particular Prayers should be made for the Ministers of God's Church, since upon the Success of their Labours, depends the Salvation of all Mankind.

The Rule being so plain in Scripture, that we are to pray for all Men, for Enemies as well as Friends; for those that are without the Fold of Christ, as well as for those within it: One would think Christians should be very well agreed as to what Persons they are bound to pray for; and so they would certainly be, if they could all content themselves, both in Faith and Practice, to keep to *that which is written*. But there is an Opinion which very much prevails in the World, and which for the shew of Piety and Charity it carries in it, would mighty recommend it self to all good Men, if God's Word would but warrant it, namely, that Prayers are to be made for the Dead as well as for the Living. But the Holy Spirit has no where given us any Direction about it. And it appearing in the Gospel, that there are but two States after this Life, one of Happiness, the other of Misery, both of which are for Eternity, 'tis in vain to hope by any Intercessions of ours,

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to alter the positive Determinations and Decrees of God, to procure Ease or Refreshment, much less an intire Deliverance, for those whom he has shut up in the Prisons of Horroure and Darkness.

The Preacher tells us that *As the Tree falleth, in what place soever it be, there it lies*; Intimating, that a Man's Condition after his Departure hence, is unalterable. If the Blood of Christ will not avail for Mercy, to those who dye Impenitent, how great a Presumption is it for us sinful Wretches to attempt it by our Prayers. Our Saviour Christ exhorts us *to agree with our Adversary quickly, whilst we are in the way, to make our Peace with God in this Life; for if he cast us into Prison, there is no coming out thence, till we have paid the utter-most Farthing*: That is, there is no Possibility of Deliverance out of it; for if we are not able to satisfy the Justice of God for any one of our Sins, How is it possible for us to discharge our whole Debt.

Eccl. 2. 3.

Mat. 5. 25.

'Tis indeed pretended, that there is a middle State of Purgatory, between Heaven and Hell; but 'tis meerly an Invention of those who seek their Advantage by it: There is no mention of any such place in the Word of God, but the whole

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Tenour of Scripture, and the Judgment of the Fathers, are against it.

Our State of Purgation, is in this Life only ; God sends Afflictions and Tribulations upon his Servants, to try and purify them ; *Gold is tryed in the Fire*, says the Son of Sirach, and acceptable Men, in the Furnace of Adversity ; and in Strictness, nothing has any Power to cleanse the Soul, but the Blood of

Heb. 9.14. Jesus. If we have Faith in his Blood, the Author to the Hebrews, tells us, it will purge our Consciences from Dead Works, to serve the Living God. Let us therefore take care to have our Souls cleansed and purify'd from Sin, before we are called to the Judgment-Seat of God ; to which end, let us offer up fervent Prayers to God for our selves, and for all Men Living. But for the Dead, *the Night is come upon them, in which, as our Saviour tells us, no Man can work.* 'Tis impossible for them to make their Condition better than it was at the Moment of their Departure ; and 'tis in vain for us to attempt it for them, if they have done well, they are certainly gone into Life Everlasting, but if ill, *they shall never see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth for ever upon them.*

It

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It remains, Thirdly, That I briefly shew you for your Encouragement to this Duty, what Power and Efficacy there is in Prayers, when offer'd up to God for such things or Persons, and in such a manner as they ought to be.

We have not only the most gracious Promises made to this Duty, but in the Old Testament, we read of wonderful Effects that have proceeded from it. At *Elijah's earnest Prayer, God shut up the Heavens, that no Rain fell upon the Earth by the space of Three Years and Six Months.* Again, when he prayed to God to remove that heavy Judgment, *the Heaven gave Rain, and the Earth brought forth her Fruit.* When *Jehosaphat was surrounded with his Enemies, and had no hopes of defending his People against such unequal Numbers, when he knew not what to do, his Eyes were upon God.* 2 Chron. 20. 12. *He apply'd himself in Prayer to him, and God sent Division amongst his Enemies, so that every one helped to destroy another.*

We meet with many more Examples of the same nature, how Prayer has prevail'd with God for Temporal Blessings, and Mercies. But the Effect of it is infallibly certain, when it is made in such a manner as it ought to be, for Spiritual

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Graces.

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Graces. The Promises are then absolute, *Ask and ye shall receive*; we can meet with no Disappointment, unless we ask in such a way, as it is not suitable for the Majesty of God to give ear to us. If Men approach the Throne of Grace, as 'tis too common, when they petition for Spiritual things, with cold Affections, and wandering Thoughts; when they are so indifferent, when they shew so little Regard to God or to his Gifts, How can they hope otherwise, but that God will disdain and reject them?

Our Saviour in the Gospel, recommends to our Imitation, the Importunities of the poor Widow, who weary'd out her Judge, and made him do her Justice against her Adversary; tho' otherwise he would not have done it, either for God's Sake or Man's. If we hope for Success in our Petitions, like her, we must not be discouraged with a few Denials, but the more Obstructions, or Difficulties we meet with, we must sollicit our Business with so much the greater Earnestness.

Christ himself, 'tho' he was ready to do all good Offices to all Men, yet he once thought fit to exercise the Faith and Patience of the Woman of *Canan*. The first time she offer'd her Petition to him,

Have

Have Mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of Mat. 15. *David.* He answered her not a word ; 22. and when she renew'd it again, *Lord help me,* he gave her such an Answer, as most other Women would have taken for an Affront. *It is not meet, says he, to take the Childrens Bread, and to cast it to Dogs.* But she made a better use of it, and took that Opportunity, to express the Sense she had of his Power and Greatness, and of her own Unworthiness ; by which means she obtain'd what she ask'd for her, and withal, a Grant at large, of whatever she should desire. *O Woman, great is thy Faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*

These things are written for our Instruction, that we should be devout and earnest in our Prayers to God, that we express by our Importunity, how great a Value we set upon the good things we ask of him ; and then we may be assured, *That Whatsoever we ask the Father in the Name of Christ, he will give it us.*

DIS-

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Of FASTING.

MAT. ix. 15.

And Jesus said unto them, Can the Children of the Bride-Chamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

THE Life of Man depends intirely upon the Will of Almighty God; he continues or withdraws it according to his own good Pleasure. *Psal. 104. 29.* When he taketh away our Breath we die, and are turned again to our Dust. The time

time which God has allotted us here on Earth, we ought to look upon as a most precious Talent, entrusted with us, not not for Ease or Pleasure, or trifling Businesses, but considering the Shortness and Uncertainty of it, we should carefully endeavour to improve every Moment, employing our selves in such Duties and religious Actions, as may answer the great End and Design of our Being, and become those who are *re-generated by the Holy Spirit*, and are made new *Creatures*,

This the Apostle reminds us of in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*. *We are God's Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good Works; which God hath ordained, that we should walk in them.* The Duties and Exercises of our Holy Religion, are frequently in Scripture, called good Works, and we are earnestly exhorted to the Practice of them: And we of the Reformed Religion, particularly of the *Church of England*, do as sincerely and heartily contend for them, as our Adversaries themselves, of the *Church of Rome*, can do, tho' they commonly charge us as utter Enemies to, and Despisers of them: There is indeed this Difference between us, that at the same time

time that we Preach up, and Inculcate the Necessity of good Works, we give our People this Caution, not to ascribe the Merit of them to themselves, nor expect Remission of Sins and Everlasting Life from them.

For 'tis plain from Scripture, that our Justification and Salvation, are wholly owing to the free Mercy of God in his Son Christ Jesus. And the good Works we do, (as St. *Austin* teaches us) are the Fruits and Effects of God's Grace ; they do not bring forth Grace, says he, but are brought forth of it : They are so far from justifying us, that a Man must first be justified through Faith, before he is able to perform them. From whence it follows, That the Praise of what we do well, is due to God only ; and the most Righteous Man upon Earth, has nothing of his own to boast of, but must say with St. *Paul*, *By the Grace of God, I am what I am.*

1 Ep. Rom. 15. 10.

But notwithstanding this, it is required of us, to be as zealous of good Works, as if we could really merit by them ; for otherwise, How can we shew our selves to be the Children of God, if we do not follow the Rules, and obey the Laws which he has prescribed to us ?

How

How can it appear either to our selves or to others, that our Faith is true and lively, such as God will accept of to our Justification, unless it brings forth the Fruits of Righteousness? And that which should weigh with us above all other Reasons, is, That if no Praise or Honour, were due to our selves, upon the account of our good Actions, yet the Grace of God, is magnifyed by them. And by *Letting our Lights so shine before Men, we stir up their Hearts to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

Neither is it any Disadvantage to us, nor ought it to be any Discouragement to us in the course of our Obedience, that by the best Works we can do, we cannot merit any thing of God, since we shall receive from him a greater Reward, upon the account of our Faith, if it be sincere and lively, than our Actions could deserve, if they were wrought by our own Strength, or were otherwise intirely perfect.

It seem'd proper in this place, to say thus much concerning good Works in general; Fasting, which is the Subject of this Discourse, having been thought by many Men, a Meritorious Work, and great Stres having been laid upon it, as a Plea for Justification. So

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So the Pharisee in the Parable, amongst many other things which he made his Boast of, after that he had pleaded that he was *No Extortioner, no Unjust Person, no Adulterer*, he comes to justify himself upon positive Duties, and upon this in the first place. *I fast twice in the Week, I give Tiths of all that I possess.* Our Saviour allows that he did well in these things, for he brings him as an Example of one whose Righteousness did him no good, because he would justify himself upon it ; which being the Act of God's free Grace only, it was the Height of Pride and Arrogance, for any Man to assume the Power of it to himself.

Whereas the Publican, who by his Office had great Temptations and Opportunities for Villany, and very probably comply'd with them, yet for the sake of his Humility and Contrition, and because he built all his Hopes upon God's Mercy only, went home justified, when the other, with all the good Deeds he boasted of, was rejected.

It appears then, as from many other places of Scripture, so even from this Parable, that Fasting, when perform'd aright, is a good Work, and consequently it is a Christian Duty ; and that we

may

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may perform it as we ought to do, it shall be considered in these following Particulars.

I. I shall shew wherein the Nature of Religious Fasting consists, and for what Ends and Purposes we ought to make use of it.

II. What are the proper Times and Seasons, for the Performance of this Duty.

III. How available it is with God, and what great Benefits have accrued from it.

I. I shall shew wherein the nature of Religious Fasting consists, and for what Ends and Purposes we are to make use of it.

Fasting is a denying our selves our ordinary Food and Refreshments. It does not consist (as many wou'd have it to do) in abstaining from this or that sort of Diet, in forbearing to eat Flesh, and at the same time, taking the Liberty of other things, no less agreeable to the Appetite, and as nourishing to Nature; but it is a refusing to eat or drink any thing at all, till the time appointed for the Fast, is expired.

Our Saviour made no distinction of the kinds of Food, in answering the Question

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Question which the Disciples of *John* put to him ; he allows that his Disciples were no Fasters, what Food soever it were which they did eat and drink ; he does not therefore deny the Charge brought against them, but he vindicates their Innocence, and excuses their not fasting with this Reason, because *The Bridegroom was then amongst them.*

An abstaining then from all kinds of Food, and from all sensual Pleasures and Enjoyments, is true fasting, but this of it self, is an indifferent Action ; it may be good or bad, political or religious ; to determine which of them it is, depends upon the Ends and Circumstances of using of it. Men may fast for their Health, and this is no otherways a good Action, than taking Physick, or using Exercises. Sometimes Fasting or Abstinence, is appointed by Civil Gouvernours, for no other Design, but for sparing of Food ; as in a Siege, or in a time of Dearth and great Scarcity. In this Nation of ours, Laws of this nature have been made, for the Encouragement of Fishery and Increase of Seamen ; in which Cases, to obey, is a Duty obliging the Conscience, but what is injoin'd, is only upon a political account,

count, and may properly be called a State Fast; whereas Religious fasting, requires a Religious, as well as a Just and Lawful End. And Religious Ends of fasting, may be reduced to these Three following.

1. When we fast with a Design to chastise and mortify the Body, to bring it into Subjection to the Spirit, and keep it under the Command of Religion and Reason. Such Severities St. Paul used upon himself. *I keep under my body* (says ^{1 Ep. Cor.} he) *and bring it into Subjection, least that* ^{9. 27.} *by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away.*

2. Another Religious End of fasting is, when it is done with Design to raise and quicken the Soul, that it may be the more active, devout and fervent in Prayer, or the more intent upon any Spiritual Business or Employment; those sluggish Inclinations, and that Heaviness of the Spirits being prevented, which usually rises from a full Stomach, and a satisfy'd Appetite.

Thus we read that the Prophets and Teachers of *Antioch*, were fasting when they received Command from the Holy Ghost, *to separate Barnabas and Saul,* ^{Act. 13. 2.} *for the Work whereunto he had called them.*

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Without doubt they fasted for this End, that by earnest Prayers and Intercessions with Almighty God, they might know his good Pleasure concerning those Persons.

v. 23.

In the Chapter following, we find those two Apostles using the same Method upon the like Occasion. When they had ordained Elders in every Church, and had Prayed with Fasting, they commended those Churches to the Lord, in whom they believed: So great and weighty a Work as that of Ordination, the Apostles would not enter upon, without due Preparation for it, by Prayer and Fasting.

A 3d. Religious End of Fasting, is, when it is intended as a Sign or Testimony of an Humble Submission to the Will of God, and of an unfeigned Sorrow and Contrition for our Sins, when we use it by way of Revenge upon our selves, for the Follies and Vanities we are too apt to be delighted with.

These are the several Ends which make Fasting a religious Duty, a good Work, Well-pleasing to God, and profitable to our own Souls.

But they who Fast meerly for Fashion's Sake, or because they would do like other

other Men, are a formal, contemptible sort of Christians, who do their Bodies a great deal of Wrong, in afflicting them to no manner of purpose. They who hope to gain the Praise and Applauses of the World, by such an Appearance of Strictness and Severity, if they happen to succeed in their Design, *Verily, they have their Reward here*, but hereafter, a Portion is assign'd for such Vain-glorious Wretches, amongst *Hypocrites and Unbelievers.*

There are yet other Ends of Fasting, much worse than these, and more displeasing to God; as that which the Pharisee proposed to himself, to merit his Justification by it, which is to exclude the Mercy of God, from having any thing to do in that Action, which must intirely proceed from him. 'Tis such an Instance of Pride and Presumption, that the Publican, who had no good Deeds to boast of, but threw himself wholly upon God's Mercy, was justified before him.

'Tis also a most grievous Provocation offered to Almighty God, when Religious Duties are perverted to wicked Ends and Purposes; the Scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel, are reproved by our Sa-

viour for *using long Prayers*, as a better
 Mat. 23. Pretence for *devouring Widows Houses* ;
 14. and in the Prophet *Isaiah*, we read of
 those who *fasted for Strife and Debate*,
 Isa. 58.4. and to smite with the *Fist of Wickedness*.
 'Tis too common a thing for an ill Cause,
 to be carried on with religious Preten-
 ces, and particularly by Fasting, Men
 would seem to engage God in their Par-
 ty, that so the World may be deceived
 into the better Opinion of their Designs.

The nature of Fasting being thus ex-
 plain'd, and the several Kinds of it,
 whether good or evil, or indifferent, ha-
 ving been distinguish'd from one an-
 other. I proceed to the 2d Particular,
 to shew what are the proper Times and
 Seasons for the Exercise of this religious
 Duty ; and here we must consider Fast-
 ing as it is, either a publick or a private
 Duty ; each of them are necessary upon
 their proper Occasions, and we meet
 with Examples of them both in Holy
 Scripture.

1. As to Publick Fasts, such as are
 injoin'd by the Lawful Authority of
 our Superiours, whether in Church or
 State : As they are Judges of the Occa-
 sions, so are they likewise Judges of the
 proper Seasons for such Fasting ; and
 since

since Princes have the chief Interest and Concern in the Welfare and Prosperity of their Kingdoms, they are obliged to use such proper Methods as may appease the Wrath of God, and put a Stop to his Judgments, when he gives manifest Signs of his Displeasure, by sending Earthquakes, Famine, War or Pestilence, to afflict their Country.

And what Methods are so likely to prevail with God for Mercy, as a General Fast and Humiliation, both of Prince and People: We read that good Kings under the Law, made use of it on such Occasions, particularly *Jehosopha*t, when his Enemies were ready to fall upon him, *he feared; and set himself to seek the Lord*, ^{2 Chron.} *and proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah.* ^{20. 3.}

Subjects are bound for Conscience-sake, to obey the higher Powers in all things that are Lawful, much greater then is the Obligation to Obedience, when Duties so religious as this of Fasting, and at such times so fit and necessary, are the Subject of their Commands.

As for the stated Fasts of the Church, appointed by our spiritual Governours, to be constantly kept at certain set Times and Seasons, such as Lent, the Eves of Holy-Days, and Ember-Weeks, the Cu-

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stom, Practice and Authority of the Church, are of sufficient Force to bind the Consciences of all her Members to the Observation of them.

Indeed, it does not appear that the Apostles appointed any set Days of Fasting, to be generally kept of all, but their Successours saw just Reason to exercise that Authority in this Particular, which the Apostles in their Times, might not think so expedient to be made use of.

And what they did herein, is warranted by the Practice of the Jewish Church, who (besides the Day of Atone-
Levit. 23. ment, the Tenth Day of the Seventh
27. Month, which was the only Fasting-
Day appointed by *Moses*) had several other Fasts ordained by the Governours of the Church, which are reckon'd up by the Prophet *Zachariah*.

The Fast of the Fourth, Fifth, Seventh and Tenth Months, none of which (except that of the Seventh Month) appearing to have been instituted in the Law of *Moses*, we cannot otherways judge, than that they were appointed by their Governours upon special Occasions, rather out of Devotion, than by any express Command from God.

We

Of FASTING.

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We have therefore the Practice of the Jewish Church, to justify the Observation of our Stated Fasts, in Obedience to the Authority of our Ecclesiastical Superiors, by which they are appointed; but this one thing must be allowed to hold in their Laws, as well as those of the Civil Power, that they are not unalterable in themselves, but are liable to be changed, suspended, or revers'd by an equal Authority to that, by which they were at first established.

This is the nature of all Human Constitutions whatsoever; and consequently, if the Authority of the present Church, should think fit to alter any thing, either as to the Times, or the Manner of our Fasting, we are not so tyed up to the Usages or Decrees of those that have been before us, but that this later Obligation supersedes the Force of the other, and ought to be the Rule and Measure of our Obedience.

The Times therefore of Publick Fast-
ing, being left to the Appointment of
our Governours, there are other Occa-
sions which require the Exercise of this
Duty ; which as they concern every par-
ticular Man in his own private Circum-

D 4 stances,

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stances, each one must determine for himself, when is the most proper time for it.

Our Saviour has left us his own Example for Fasting, an Example which we ought to follow, but can never hope to come up to. *He fasted Forty Days and Forty Nights, in the Wilderness.* He also has prescribed the Manner how we are to Fast, and hath proposed a Reward to it. *But thou when thou fastest, anoint thy Head and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which feeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* He likewise teacheth us that the outward abstaining from Food, is of no Value, unless it be accompany'd with inward Sorrow and Humiliation; for we see when the Disciples of John put the Question to him, Why his Disciples did not fast? He answers them in the words of the Text, *Can the Children of the Bride-Chamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them?* Plainly intimating, that true Fasting is Mourning: It supposes Men to be so pricked in their Hearts, with the Sense of their Sins, and so terrify'd with the Threatnings which God has denounced against them, that they

Mat. 4. 1,

2.

Mat. 6. 17,

18.

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they have little Desire after Food, or the Pleasures of Sense, which have been their Tempters, and have brought them into the deplorable Condition they find themselves reduced to; and that they had rather mortify and subdue the Flesh, by withholding from it, its ordinary Nourishment and Support, than by making Provision for it, to put themselves in greater Danger of fulfilling its Lusts.

Such is the Doctrin of our Saviour Christ, concerning the Nature and Manner of Fasting; but he has no where in joyn'd any set Time for it, only in general he tells us, *The Days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.* After Christ had withdrawn his Visible Presence from his Church, then all his true Disciples would find Occasion enough for mourning and lamenting; the vehement Desires, which every sincere Friend and Lover of their Saviour would have after him, would often be too strong for the natural Desires of Food, and make them very easily contented to neglect and despise it.

They would very often retire themselves from all Earthly Enjoyments, the better to entertain their Minds with Heavely

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venly Objects; particularly, with the sure and certain Hopes of seeing Him, who is now invisible.

Eccl. 3.

There is (says Solomon) *A time for all things; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to rejoice.* The time whilst our Saviour was upon Earth, was not so proper for this Exercise of Fasting; but now in his Absence, every Christian has frequent Occasions to call him to this Duty, and Men of the meanest Capacity, may know when are the fit Opportunities for it.

When God humbles us by Adversity, by Sickness, loss of Friends, or of our Estates; or by spiritual Desertion, withdrawing his Grace and Comforts from our Souls; 'tis then high time for us to humble our selves, and to endeavour by the best Means we can, to recover his Favour: This was *David's*

Psal. 35. Practice. *My Cloathing* (says he) *was Sackcloth, I humbled my Soul with fasting.*

13. And the Prophet *Daniel*, was mourning Three full Weeks. He tells us, that

Dan. 10.3. *He ate no pleasant Bread, neither came Flesh or Wine, into his Mouth.*

As to any determinate space of Time, for the Continuance of our Fasting, Men's Constitutions

Constitutions being so different from one another, as to Strength or Weakness, great Regard is to be had to them ; but the Decree of the Council of *Calcedon*, is the best Rule in this Case, That every Person in his Private and Publick Fast, should continue all the Day without Meat and Drink, till after the Evening Prayer ; and whosoever did eat or drink before the Evening Prayer was ended, should be reputed not to consider the Sacredness of his Fast.

Having thus shewn the Nature and Kinds of Fasting, and what are the fit Times and Occasions for the Exercise of this Duty, I proceed to the Third thing proposed, to shew how available it is with God, and what great Benefits have accrued from it.

The Angel *Raphael*, told *Tobias*, *Pray-* Tob. 12. 8.
er is good with fasting. And the Good which Men have received from it, may appear from several Instances which we meet with in Holy Scripture ; when King *Ahab*, at the Instigation of *Jezebel*, had murder'd *Naboth*, and contrary to all Right and Honour, had seiz'd upon his Vineyard ; God by his Prophet *Elijah*, threatned the severest Judgments against him. *In the Place where Dogs licked the Blood* 1 Kings; 21. 19.

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v. 21.

v. 24.

v. 27.

Blood of Naboth, shall Dogs lick thy Blood, even thine. And, I will bring Evil upon thee, and will take away thy Posterity. Him that dieth of Ahab in the City, the Dogs shall eat, and him that dieth in the Field, shall the Fowls of the Air eat. But the Rigour of this Sentence, was afterwards abated. Ahab rent his Cloaths, and put Sackcloth upon his Flesh, and fasted; and lay in Sackcloth, and went softly: Upon which, this word of the Lord, came to Elijah, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? I will not bring the Evil in his Days, but in his Son's Days, will I bring the Evil upon his House.

The like good Success, the People of Nineveh met with from their fasting; God sent the Prophet *Jonah*, to denounce this peremptory Sentence against them.

Jonah, 3. Yet Forty Days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown; so the People believed God, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sackcloth, from the Greatest, even to the Least of them: And God saw their Works that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the Evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not.

In the New Testament, the Disciples of Christ, were so sensible of the Power and Efficacy of Fasting, that they would not

not undertake any Matter of great Moment, without it ; the Apostles when they were to confer Holy Orders, prepared themselves for so weighty an Office, *by Prayer and Fasting.*

And as the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to second such Means with the desired Success, so the Apostles had no Power to cast out the evil Spirit, but by the same sort of Preparation. *This Kind* (says our Saviour) Mar.9.29. *can come forth by nothing but by Prayer and Fasting.*

And as by the due Exercise of Fasting, great Favours have been obtained of Almighty God in this Life, so 'tis a sufficient Encouragement to the Practice of it, that our Saviour Christ promises to those who fast as they ought to do, *That his Father who feath in secret, will reward* Mat.6.18. *them openly.*

Since then, in the Age we now live in, there are certainly as many, and as great Occasions of Fasting and Mourning, as have been in any one Age before it ; since our Sins are grown up to the greatest Height, and Wrath is already gone out from the Lord for them, and he is actually executing his Vengeance upon us by various Calamities ; let us follow the Pious Examples of Devout

Men

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Men in Holy Scripture, and humble our selves at the Throne of Grace, bewailing our manifold Transgressions, and interceding with God for Pardon.

Let us keep such Fasts as he has chosen, which are Times spent in hearty Sorrow and Contrition, in denying our selves our usual Sustenance, that we may mortify and subdue the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts ; and that what we spare in Expences upon our selves, we may minister to the Necessities of the Poor, that we may have wherewithal to feed the Hungry, and cloath the Naked, and to succour and relieve the Oppressed. Then *if we call, the Lord will answer, if we cry, he will say here am I.* He will be with us to bless us, and keep us from all Evil.

DIS

DISCOURSE III.

Of ALMS-DEEDS.

HEB. xiii. 16.

*To do good and to communicate,
forget not ; for with such
Sacrifices God is well plea-
sed.*

OF all the Duties of our Holy Religion, there is none that tends more to the Honour of God, and the Benefit of our Neighbour, than this Branch of Charity ; which consists in giving Alms, and relieving the Necessities of our Brethren. 'Tis the surest Sign we can give of a sincere and lively Faith. For Men will hardly be prevail'd upon, to distribute their Earthly Goods to the Poor, unless they firmly believe that

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that there are greater Treasures laid up for them in the Heavens.

And this may be the reason why so many, who profess the Christian Religion, are yet so backward and averse to this necessary Duty, their Faith is not strong enough for it; 'tis a Test which it will not bear: They are willing to own Christ, and embrace and follow the Truths of his Gospel, so far as they are consistent with Temporal Interest and Advantages, but to give away what they have, to dispose of that to others, which themselves and their Families should subsist upon, is so ready a way to Poverty, that they think they cannot in Prudence comply with it.

And whilst Men are prepossess'd with these Fears and Apprehensions of Want, to advise them to be charitable, is the same thing as if you bid them be undone; and so having to argue against the strongest Principle of Nature, that of Self-preservation, 'tis no Wonder that the best Reasons in the World, and the most importunate Persuasions we can use, do so very often prove unsuccessful.

To remove therefore, all such Fears and unreasonable Prejudices, and to convince

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convince Men of the Obligations they lie under to this Duty of Charity, and to encourage them to the Practice of it ; I shall shew these Three things.

I. That this kind of Charity, which consists in giving of Alms, is a Duty expressly required of us by Almighty God, and the Performance thereof, is very acceptable to him.

II. 'Tis a Duty, the Practice of which, is in many Respects, very advantageous to our selves.

III. That there is no Danger of falling into Poverty by a due Exercise of it, God having in Holy Scripture, given us many Assurances to the contrary.

I. That this sort of Charity which the Text calls, *To do good and to communicate*, is expressly required by Almighty God as a Duty. This is very plain under the Law of Moses, where God is particularly careful of the Poor, not only to fence and guard them from all Injury and Oppression, but to provide a Subsistence for them : He tells his People, that they should never want Objects for their Charity. *The Poor* Deut. 15. *(says he) shall never cease out of the Land ; therefore I command thee saying, thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto thy*

E Brother,

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*Brother, to thy Poor, and to thy Needy
in the Land.*

Isa. 1. 17.

Psal. 112.

9.

Chap. 2.

A&t. 4. 34.

*1 Ep. Cor.
16. 2.*

And in the Prophets, God lays so great a Stress upon this Duty, that he declares their Fasting, their Sacrifices and legal Performances, to be vain and insignificant without it. And as if it stood for all other Duties whatsoever, tis frequently in the Old Testament, called Righteousness. *He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the Poor, his Righteousness remaineth for ever.*

And in the New Testament, Christians were so sensible of their Obligations to this Duty, that we read in the *Acts*, *That they had all things common; they sold their Possessions and Goods, and parted them to all Men, as every Man had need; or rather, they would not take upon themselves to dispose of their own Charity, but committed the Trust and Management of it, to the Apostles; for so we are afterwards told, They brought the Prices of the Things that were Sold, and laid them at the Apostles Feet, and Distribution was made unto every Man, according as he had need.*

This Custom continued in the Church in the Apostles time; we find St. Paul giving Rules and Directions concerning it.

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it. And he is very earnest in many places, in exhorting the People to bring in their Alms freely and plentifully, according to their Abilities. He bids *Timothy* ^{1 Ep. Tim.} charge them that are rich in this world, 6. 17. *that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* This Thirteenth Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, is full of such charitable Exhortations. *Let brotherly love continue*; and in the Text, *To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* ^{Heb. 13. 1.}

'Tis needless to heap up many Arguments from Scripture, to prove that God does most earnestly require this Duty of us: Nature it self dictates the same thing to us; and a Man must deny his Reason, and harden his Conscience, before he can wholly shut up his Bowels of Compassion, and *hide himself from his own flesh.*

If any Preference is to be given to one Duty above another, this of Charity may claim it above all the rest, it being of all others, the most acceptable to almighty God; and indeed, the only Instance wherein our Goodness can in any Sense, be said to extend to him: Not that any Man can really be profi-

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table to God himself: But since he has appointed the Poor and Needy as his Substitutes, to receive our Alms and charitable Benevolence, and interprets what we do to them, as done to himself, the merciful Man may be said in the Distribution of his Charity, to do good to him that made him. *In as much (says our Saviour) as ye have done it to the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* As if he had said, in feeding the Hungry, and entertaining Strangers, ye refresh'd me, in cloathing the Naked, and visiting those that were Sick or in Prison, I was reliev'd and comforted by you.

'Tis in this Case as in that of Embassadors, the Honour and good Offices that are done to them, is always look't upon as done to the Prince from whom they come; therefore it was for receiving the Angels, God's Messengers, into his House, and defending them from the Insults of the Rabble, that God saved *Lot* and his Family, from the dreadful Destruction which he brought upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*.

God has put the Poor in his own Stead, that we might not want Opportunities of expressing our Love to him.

He

He that will not do good to them, would not have done it to God himself. *In as much (says our Saviour) as ye did it not to the least of these my Brethren, 45.* Mat. 25.

And though all we have, is owing to the good Providence of God, and the Oblations we make to him, are but a just Debt from us, yet if we offer it this way that he has appointed, in Charity to our distressed Brethren, God makes himself the Debtor, he charges the Summ be it more or less, to his own Account; and like the good *Samaritan*, who reliev'd the poor Traveller that fell among Thieves, he engages his Word to repay when he comes again, whatever necessary Expences are laid out upon real Objects of Charity. *He that bath pity upon the poor, (says Solomon) lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given, will be pay him again.* Prov. 19. 17.

What better Security can any Man desire for his Treasures, and where can he hope to make greater Improvement of them, than in putting them into the Hands of God, who has promised so great an Increase to those who dare trust him with them?

A sure Prospect of Advantage, will make Men dispose of what they have, out of their own Hands, how much soever they are in love with it. This is therefore the Second thing propos'd for the Encouragement of our Charity, to shew what Advantages may be expected from it.

The Spiritual Advantages arising from it, are great and many.

1. We have in return for our Charity, the good Wishes, the Prayers, and Blessings of the Poor, and this is no inconsiderable Benefit; for though the Poor may appear mean and despicable to the Eye of the World, yet are they dear to their Maker; they are the Objects of his Love and Pity, his more peculiar Charge, who are unable to do any thing for themselves, who have neither Barns nor Store-Houses, yet he feeds and preserves them, as it were by extraordinary Acts of his Providence.

Our Saviour, when he lived upon Earth, chose to put himself into their Condition; he calls them by Names of Tenderness, his Little Ones, and his Brethren; and St. James says of them,

God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which

which he bath promised to them that love him. As therefore the Poor are not able themselves, to make any Requital for the good Turns that are done them, God, who declares himself to be their Friend and Protector, will most certainly at their Desire, do it for them. They whom the Poor cannot recompence, are called Blessed by our Saviour; for therefore says he, shall they be recompensed at the Resurrection of the just. Luk. 14. 14.

And the Son of Sirach tells us, *If the needy curse thee in the bitterness of his Soul, his prayer (tho' it be a Curse) shall be heard of him that made him.* But God is of his own Nature, more inclined to do Good, than he is to inflict Evil: If then he hears the Complaint of the Poor, for Punishment and Vengeance upon their Enemies, and those who oppress them, much more will he hearken to their Prayers and Intercessions, for Blessings and Rewards upon their Friends.

The Christian therefore would do well in this Instance, to imitate the Wisdom of the Children of this World, who when they are prosecuting any ambitious Design, or have any Bounty to petition of their Prince; do strive by all means to make an Interest in those, who

are at that time most highly in Favour with him.

Luk. 11.
41.

2. Another great Advantage from Charity is, that it purifys the Soul. Give alms (says our Saviour) of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you. For the Mercy we shew to our Brethren, God will shew himself merciful to us, and will not be extreme to mark what we daily do amiss.

There are many Sins which we commit through Surprize or Inadvertency, many that pass unregarded by us, or slip out of our Memories, without any particular Confession or Repentance; these (so far as lies in us) are best atoned for by our Charity, the great Efficacy whereof, is express'd by the Son of Sirach. *As water will quench a flaming fire, so alms maketh an atonement for sin.* And we

Tob. 4.10. read in the Book of Tobit, *Alms-giving delivereth from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness;* in which Sense those

1 Ep. Pet. 4.8. words of St. Peter are commonly understood. *Above all things have fervent Charity amongst your selves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

Which Places, do not mean that there is a real or proper Efficacy in any Works of ours, to wash away Sins, and make

Satis-

Satisfaction for them, or to deliver the Sinner from such Punishments, as God's Truth and Justice are concern'd to inflict upon him. If this were true, to what Purpose did the Son of God, take our Nature upon him, and shed his Blood upon the Cross for us? But 'tis certain that our good Deeds are so far from meriting of God, or obtaining our Justification of him, that we must first be justifyed, before we can produce them? As good Fruits suppose the Tree to be good, and cannot properly be said to make it so, we in like manner, till through Faith we are ingrafted into the Body of Christ, are not able to think, or do any thing that is well-pleasing to God; and all the good Works we do afterwards, are acceptable to him, only through the Merits of Christ Jesus.

The meaning therefore of those places of Scripture, which ascribe any Virtue or Power to our good Actions, is no more than this, that they are as certainly attended with such or such beneficial Effects, as if they did really proceed from them: Works of Charity have no Strength of their own to purge away Sins, or to release us from the Punishments that are due to them. But since

the

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the charitable Man's Sins are done away, and his Pardon is made sure to him, this is said to be the Effect of Charity, no otherwise than as through the Grace of God, it is the Reward of it.

Though it be God alone that can justify Sinners, and nothing but the Obedience and Death of Christ, can merit that inestimable Favour of him, yet the Motive is as strong to encourage Men to be fruitful in good Works, that they may be as sure of the Rewards which are promised to the Practice of them, as if they were due to their Merit, or were wrought by their own inherent Force and Efficacy.

Mat. 10.
42.

And such particular Regard God takes of every Action we do of this sort, that our Saviour tells us, *Not so much as a cup of cold water, given to a Disciple in the name of a Disciple, shall lose its reward.*

This and many more such gracious Promises, which God has made to the Practice of this Duty, would (without doubt) make Men more generally in love with it, were it not that they distrust his Providence; and what Hopes soever they may have of being rewarded for their Charity in the World to come,

yet

yet in this Life they fear to be impoverished, or undone by it.

To shew how groundless and unreasonable such Fears are, is the last thing I proposed, in order to excite and encourage Men to this great Duty of Charity.

'Tis certain the Duty it self, is so agreeable to our Natures, and carries that Pleasure and Satisfaction along with it, that when such Fears are removed, there is no other Bar, that can with any good Grace, be pleaded against it.

There are indeed, many other secret Causes, which withhold Men from being charitable and beneficent; many are greedily set upon increasing what they have, others are for enjoying it themselves, in sensual Pleasures and Vanities; but these are such sordid Reasons as few Men will own; whereas the Danger of being reduced to Poverty, the ruining a Man's self, and those who depend upon him, raises such frightful Apprehensions in us, that it is look't upon as a Part of necessary Prudence, to guard our selves against it.

We see our Stock lessens by what is given out of it; and 'tis but natural for a Man to conclude, that if he continues

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ues giving, it will in time come to nothing. But this is to reckon after the manner of Men, and not as Christians ; for if we take the Promises of God into our Account, if we dare depend upon his Word, who both gives Power to get Wealth, and secures what we have gotten, to our selves and our Families, then all such Inferences as those, and the Fears and Doubts that are built upon them, must necessarily vanish. *David* tells us, *From his youth* (from the time he was able to make Observation) *to his old age, he had never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their Bread.* And that by the Righteous, he means the Charitable, appears from that which follows ; *The righteous is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed.*

We may also appeal to the Observation of all Mankind, whether this be not a very true Observation ; for amongst the numerous ways of Men's spending their Estates, and impoverishing their Families, by Intemperance, by Lust, by careless Management, or foolish Projects, 'twas scarce ever heard of, that a Man was undone, meerly by Acts of Charity ; and yet 'tis very strange,

strange, the Danger of Poverty shall
fright Men from doing their Duty,
though it be of no Force, to restrain
them from their Follies and their Lusts.

Men are used to rest very well satis-
fyed in their Condition, and to look
upon themselves to be safe enough from
Want, if they have Security given them
by some wealthy Friend; that he will
always supply their Need, and support
them. The charitable Man has this Se-
curity given him by God himself; nay, if
we are but in the way of our Duty,
if we are seeking the Kingdom of God, and Mat. 6.33.
his Righteousness, our Saviour Christ as-
sures us, that all worldly good things, shall
over and above, be provided for us. And
the Royal Psalmist exhorts Men to the
Fear of God, with this Encouragement,
that there is No want to them that fear Psal. 34.9.
him. The young Lions, says he, do lack
and suffer hunger, but they that seek the
Lord, shall not want any thing that is good.
And particularly as to the Duty of Cha-
rity, he bids Men trust in the Lord and
do good; with this Assurance, so shall Psal. 37.3.
they dwell in the Land, and verily shall
they be fed.

We have one Example in Scripture,
where God (to confirm our Faith in
these

these Promises) wrought a Miracle to fulfil them. The Widow of Sarepta, ^{1 King.17.} had but *an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little Oyl in a Cruse*, for the necessary Support of herself and her Child, and this in a time of Famine, when no more Food was to be got; yet out of this little, she spared so much as to make the Prophet *Elijah*, a Cake to keep him from starving; depending upon his Promise, that *the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of Oyl fail, until the day that the Lord should send rain upon the earth*; which accordingly came to pass. There was no Waste or Failure of either of them, as God had spoken by his Prophet.

How does this Instance upbraid the wretched Unmercifulness of many Christians! who will not spare any thing to their poor Brethren, out of their Abundance; who will not give them so much as the superfluous Crumbs, which fall from their Tables; whereas this Widow was content to run the Hazard of her own and her Son's Life, to save the Life of a Stranger.

'Tis true, she was encouraged to this extraordinary Act of Charity, by an express Promise from God, that he would make

make her Amends for it ; and this is what we are urging, that Men would follow her Example, and depend upon God's Promises, and not suffer themselves to be frightened out of charitable Actions, by the imaginary Danger of being impoverished, or undone by them.

Let not liberal Persons doubt, but that *God, who ministreth seed to the sower, will also minister bread for their food, and will multiply their seed sown, and will increase the fruits of their righteousness.*

He has many ways of doing it in the ordinary course of his Providence, and needs not to work Miracles to make good his Promises to the charitable ; he commandeth his Blessings upon them in their Store-Houses, and in all that they set their Hand unto. They have generally a wise, as well as a free Spirit, and are discreet and careful in the Management of their Affairs ; they have the Love and Good-will of their Neighbours ; all Men are desirous to deal with them, are willing to give them Credit, and all good Men are ready to assist them.

So that if a Computation could be made, there is no doubt but more charitable Persons have improved their Substance,

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stance, than have wasted or diminish'd it. But if it should be otherwise, if good Men have exhausted their Stock by their Bounty and Liberality, or if by some Misfortunes and Calamities, (from which the best of Men are not exempted) they should happen to be reduced to Straits, there is no doubt but God will some way or another, make Provision for them: Most Men will be ready to come in to their Assistance; and it can scarce be supposed they will suffer such a one to perish,

Rom. 5. 7. since the Apostle tells us, *peradventure for a good man* (that is, for one that is charitable) *there are some that will even dare to die.*

1 King. 17. 6. God has ever taken a more than ordinary Care of his Servants; he fed the Prophet *Elijah* by the Ministry of Ravens, which brought sufficient Provision to him, every Morning and Evening. Can we imagine he will be unmindful of us, if we are brought into Straits by obeying his Will? He who liberally provided for us before we could be sensible of his Benefits, or were able in any wise to express our Gratitude to him, will he deny us Necessaries, when we have spent what he gave us, to his Honour,

Honour, and in his Service? Can any Believer think he shall be left destitute of Food and Raiment, for having fed and cloathed Christ, in his Members and Representatives? Or will our great Lord and Master withhold earthly good things from those for whom he has provided *eternal weights of glory*? All such Doubts and Fears, as they are groundless, so they argue a Distrust of God's Word, and of his Providence; they are Jealousies raised in us, against the Tenderness and Love of our Redeemer, and can be nothing else but the crafty Surmises and Suggestions of the evil Spirit: Let us therefore banish them from our Souls.

And if we *believe the fatherless and the Widow in their Afflictions*, if we do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith, we have the Word and Promise of Almighty God, That he will reward our Work and Labour of Love, with the Blessings and good things of this Life present, and with Joys and Happiness unspeakable in the World to come.

DISCOURSE IV. Of REPENTANCE.

JOEL, ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

And rent your Heart and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

THERE is no Duty of a Christian, more frequently inculcated, or press'd upon Men with greater Earnestness in Holy Scripture, than

than that of Repentance; which implies, not only an unfeigned Sorrow for Sin, but an actual and speedy Reformation of our Lives, and a serious Conversion to God. And 'tis in great Mercy to our Souls, that the Spirit of God does so excite and encourage us to the Practice of this Duty, there being scarce any Moment of our Lives, wherein we do not provoke the Justice of God, by one Failing or another; and very often we fall away from him by presumptuous Sins, and expose our selves to the Danger of eternal Damnation.

Wherever Men preach the glad Tidings of Salvation, Repentance, as a necessary Term or Condition, ought to be joined with it: There is no Forgiveness of Sins to be had without it, therefore our Saviour puts them together. Luk. 24. *It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins, should be preached in his name, among all nations.* And tho' in the Scriptures of the New Testament, our Faith has such glorious Privileges ascrib'd to it, that it may seem the only thing required of us for our Salvation, yet is it of no Force or Efficacy, without Repentance; therefore St. Paul, when he tells

Act. 20. the Church of *Ephesus*, That he had kept
20. back nothing that was profitable unto them, comprehends the whole Doctrin he had taught, in these two Duties join'd together, *Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Not only *John the Baptist*, who was to prepare the way of the Lord, began his Ministry for that End, with the Doctrin of Repentance, but our Saviour Christ himself, insisted as much upon it in his Preaching, and gave it in Command to his Apostles, that they should continue to do so in theirs.

In the Propheccys of the Old Testament, there are many very earnest Exhortations to this Duty; this of the Text, is both the fullest to instruct us in the Manner how we are to repent, and the most moving to excite us to it. *Therefore also now saith the Lord, &c.*

The Prophet here gives us a Rule for our Behaviour in Times of Imminent Danger and Distress; when the Judgments of God are ready to fall heavy upon us, there is no other way to prevent them, but by returning to him, and becoming sincerely penitent. He had just before been describing God's Judgments, and representing them as so

severe

severe and terrible, that none can abide them. But then in the midst of his Displeasure, he invites his People to return to him, plainly signifying to them, that tho' their Provocations were never so great, and their Sins were ripe for Punishment, yet their Repentance would not be too late to obtain Pardon, of a most Merciful and most indulgent Father.

God himself tells us by his Prophet *Ezekiel*, That *He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should rather return from his ways and live.* And in the First Epistle of St. John, we read, *That if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Why should God take upon himself in Holy Scripture, the Title of a Father, but to express the Bowels of Tenderness and Compassion, which he bears towards us, and to shew how concern'd he is for our true Interest and Happiness? What other Inference can we make from the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel, but that God does earnestly desire our Amendment, and is ready to receive with Joy, those who will leave off their Extravagancies, and return to him with Humility, and an unfeigned Repentance? F 3 And

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And for our Encouragement to depend upon him, that he will most certainly make good these his most gracious Promises to the Penitent, he has actually fulfill'd them in many Instances which we meet with in the Scriptures. Upon King *Ezekiah's* Mourning and Humiliation, God sent an Angel to destroy a numerous Army of the *Assyrians* which came against him, under

Isa. 37. 36. the Conduct of *Sennacherib*. And when his Son *Manasseh*, for his abominable Wickedness, was deliver'd into the Hand of the *Assyrians*, and sent Prisoner to *Babylon*, having besought the Lord his God, when he was in his Affliction, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, he was intreated of him, and heard his Supplications, and brought him again to *Jerusalem*, into his Kingdom.

2 Chron. 33. 12. Our Saviour in the Gospel, shew'd the greatest Favour to the sinful Woman, and to *Zacheus*: to the one he said, *Thy sins are forgiven*. To the other, *Luk. 19. 9.* *This day salvation is come to this house*. They were both notorious Sinners, but he forgave them upon their Repentance.

If then our Adversary the Devil, should take Advantage from the Heinousness of our

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our Sins, to tempt us to Despair, we may comfort and encourage our selves against him, by reflecting upon those many Examples which the Scriptures afford us, of Men who had been guilty of the most enormous Crimes, and yet were restored to the Favour of God, as soon as they would forsake their Sins, and sincerely return to him.

We need not question but God will shew the same Favour and Mercy to us, only if our Sins have been greater than theirs, our Sorrow and Contrition must bear Proportion with them ; we must so much the more humble ourselves, and set upon our Repentance, with the greater Strictness and Severity.

But for the better Performance of so great and necessary a Work, as this of our Repentance and Conversion, let us consider these Two Things.

I. From what, and to whom it is that we are to return.

II. By what Means we may hope to perfect our Conversion, and after what Manner we must apply our selves to it.

1. Then, We must return from our Sins, for these (as the Prophet *Isaiah* Isa. 59. 2. tells us) *Do separate between God and us*;

F 4. they

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they make him bide away his face, that he will not hear us. And by Sin, we are not only to understand such Words or Actions as (in the Judgment of all Mankind) are Wicked and Unlawful, but even the most Secret Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, if they swerve from the Law of God; every evil Imagination or Design, all foul Desires and Affections of the Mind; for these are naked and open to the Eyes God, and are hated by him, and do separate us from him, as well as those that are most publickly committed.

Neither are we only to repent and return from our wicked Practices, our secret or open Transgressions of the Law of God, but we must likewise forsake and renounce all false Notions or Opinions, that we may have entertain'd of God and Religion; which are the Causes of Superstition, and of several unreasonable, and unlawful ways of Worshiping our Maker. If we resolve to hold any of these, there can be no Hopes of good Fruit from our Repentance.

We are obliged to be sound in the Faith, as well as upright in our Manners and Conversation; 'tis in vain to pretend to the one without the other;

so

so that if through Weakness of Judgment, or the Prejudices of Education, we have been so unhappy as to fall into Heresy, or any dangerous Mistakes concerning the Nature of God, or the Manner of worshiping him, we must shew our selves as willing to retract these Errours, as to forsake our Sins, whenever they are so plainly discover'd to us, That we ought in reason to be convinced of them. For God, whom we are to return to, is a God of *truth*, as well as of *righteousness*; and we must follow him in both, if we hope to see him as he is, and be united to him.

But *why*, How is this to be effected? Our Sins are at Enmity against God; no Creature of what Dignity or Excellence soever, no Methods of Man's prescribing, no, not our own good Works, can reconcile us to him. 'Tis by Faith only, that we are ingrafted in him; without this Grace, 'tis but lost Labour to enter upon Repentance; no true Conversion to God, or Union with him, is to be had without it.

By Faith God is represented to us, as fully reconcil'd through his Son Christ Jesus; this encourages and perfects our Repentance, till God accepts of it, and receives

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receives us into his Grace and Favour. The Eternal Son of God, of the same Nature and Substance with the Father, was made Man, to become our Mediator, that by the Merits of his Sufferings and Humiliation, he might satisfy his Fathers Justice, and appease his Anger. If *Faith* did not give us the Evidence and full Assurance of this Truth, the Guilt of our Sins would make us flee from God as our first Parents did, and instead of seeking to him for Mercy, like them, we should rather endeavour to hide our selves from him.

Joh. 14.6. But our Saviour tells us of himself, *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the father but by me.* 'Twas Christ alone, who by the Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, was our Propitiation and Atonement, and made full Satisfaction to his Father's Justice for our Sins. And the Apostle tells us, Act. 5.31. *That God exalted him with his right hand, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* Christ is therefore the Person by whom alone we are enabled to return to God; Repentance without Faith in him, (if it be accompany'd with never so many good Works) is vain and unprofitable; nay, it is sinful, and drives us farther from

from God, if we rely upon it for the obtaining his Favour, since it is the Merit of Christ alone, that can make any thing Praise-worthy in us; 'tis through his Blood that our Repentance meets with Acceptance from God, and is available to our Justification.

The words of the Text, do fully teach us the Manner and Measures of the Duty of Repentance, both as it is inwardly in the Soul, and as it is outwardly concern'd in Bodily Actions; which serve either to exercise and enliven it, or to testify to others, the Anguish and Remorse of Spirit which attends it: We must return unto God with all the Affections of our Souls, entirely *with the whole heart*: To do otherwise, is but the fruitless Labour of the Hypocrite, which is justly upbraided and reproved with those words of the Prophet, *This people draweth near me Isa. 29.13.* with their mouths, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me. To reserve any secret Affection for Sin, makes all other Endeavours of returning to God, unsuccessful; such a Heart, how well soever it may approve it self to the World, God will look upon as removed far from him.

This

Deut. 6. 5. This is God's own Precept, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy thine heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy might.* What have we then left to bestow upon the World or upon our Lusts? 'Tis inconsistent with the Purity and Sincerity of Religion, for Men to halt on both Sides, and to divide themselves between God and Mammon; to be sometimes serious and devout, and to seem deeply affected with Remorse for their Sins, and then again to lay aside all such Thoughts, and return to their former wicked Courses.

But such is the Frailty and Corruption of our Nature, so unhappy a Conflict there is between the Powers of our Flesh, and those of our Spirit, that our Lusts and Passions, especially if they have been once confirm'd by vicious Habits, will often prove too hard for our strongest Vows and Resolutions of Amendment; therefore in the Text we are advised and exhorted to the Duty of Fasting: This is the most likely way of subduing the Flesh, and gaining the compleat Mastery over our selves, that we may return unto God with all our Hearts. But by Fasting, we are not to understand a superstitious Abstinence from

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from this or that particular sort of Diet, making a Distinction of Meats, where God has made none: But 'tis such abstaining from all kinds of Food, as may be most serviceable to the great Ends of Repentance, by taming and subduing the Flesh, that we may the better follow the Dictates of our own Reason, assisted by the gracious Influences of God's Holy Spirit.

And as an outward Testimony of that hearty Sorrow and Remorse which we feel in our selves, for having offended God by our Iniquities, and having so justly deserv'd the heavy Judgments which he has threatned against them. *Our fasting must be accompany'd with weeping and with mourning.* Thus holy David express'd his Repentance; not being satisfy'd with grieving for his Sins in Private, he publickly confess'd and bewail'd them, and own'd to all the World, what Trouble and Anguish of Spirit, they had brought upon him.

By such open Professions of Repentance as he was wont to make, Men take the Shame of their Sins to themselves, and as far as in them lies, remove the Scandal and Offence which was thereby given to their Brethren,

con-

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contrary to the Practice of many Hardned Wretches, *who glory in their Shame*; and if they confess their Sins to one another, 'tis only to applaud themselves, and triumph in them.

But tho' Weeping and Mourning, and other such outward Acts or Signs of Repentance, are very proper Expressions of that inward Grief and Dread which we feel from our Sins, yet we must take great Care that the whole Work of Repentance, be not made to consist in them. For these are easily counterfeited by the Hypocrite; who, when ~~he~~ pleases, as the Gospel observes, can *make himself of a sad countenance*; and as to Looks or Gestures, or any Bodily Performances, 'tis hardly possible to discern him from those that are sincerely penitent.

But outward Ceremonies or Appearances, are no ways acceptable with God, any farther than as they are Signs or Indications of the inward Affections of the Soul; they may serve in some Measure to edify others, and make them serious and mindful of their Duty, but to our selves, they are altogether unprofitable, unless the Heart goes along with them. Therefore we are exhorted in the

the Text, *To rent our heart and not our garments*, when we turn to the Lord our God; which is an Allusion to the Custom of some Eastern Nations, who were wont to tear their Garments, when any extraordinary Calamity or Affliction befel them. The Concern then which we have for our Sins, must wound our Hearts and Consciences, must make us humble and contrite before God, otherwise, all outward Gestures and Shews of Repentance, are hypocritical and insignificant.

But least the Difficulties of Repentance, the Self-denial and Austerities which must be exercis'd in it, should discourage Men from undertaking so necessary a Duty, or least the Justice of God, his Hatred of Sin, and declared Indignation against it, should make Men despair of Success, and so lay aside all Thoughts of it, and grow the bolder and more hardened in their Wickedness, to prevent such kind of Prejudices, which are commonly attended with all manner of Licentious Living, the Prophet represents God to us in such Characters, as may invite us to return to him; they are the same Attributes in which God describes himself to Moses. *The Lord* Exod. 34. *God, merciful and gracious, long suffering,* ^{6.} *and*

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and abundant in goodness and truth. God is so gracious and compassionate, that it is more agreeable to his Nature to do Good, than to inflict Evil; he is so merciful, that he carrys towards us, the Bowels and Tenderness of a Father. This

Psal. 103. 13. the Psalmist assures us of. *Like as a father pitith his own Children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him.* He makes Allowances for our Frailities, *for he knoweth whereof we are made; he remembreth that we are but dust.* And even when we have sinned deliberately, and of malicious Wickness, he is ready to receive us with open Arms, upon our Return to him: And if we repent of our Sins, he will repent of the Evil, the Plagues and Punishments which he has so often denounced against them.

If this be the true Nature of God, and the Sinner stands upon such hopeful Terms of Reconciliation with him, how wicked and dangerous is that Opinion of the *Novatians*, who affirm, That Men once receiv'd into Favour by God, and grafted into the Body of his Son Christ Jesus, if they shall afterwards fall into Apostacy, or some other Enormous Crimes, there can be no farther Hopes of Mercy for them. This Doctrin of theirs,

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theirs, how contrary soever it be to the revealed Will of God, and to the whole Tenour of the Gospel, they pretend to ground upon these places of Scripture.

*For it is impossible for those who were once Heb. 6. 4.
inlightned, and have tasted of the heavenly 5, 6.
gift, and were made partakers of the Holy
Ghost, and have tasted the good word of
God, and the powers of the world to come,
if they shall fall away, to renew them again
unto Repentance. If we sin wilfully after Heb. 10.
that we have received the knowledge of the 26.
truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice
for Sins. If after they have escaped the 2 Ep. Per.
pollutions of the world, through the know- 2. 20.
ledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
they are again intangled therein, and over-
come; the latter end is worse with them,
than the beginning. But where any Ex-
pressions, either in these, or any other
parts of Scripture, may seem to favour
their Opinion, they are far from being
meant in the Sense they take them in;
unless it be where the Sin against the
Holy Ghost is understood; which is such
final falling away from Christ and his
Gospel, that it excludes Men from all
Possibility of Pardon, because it supposes
them uncapable of Repentance, which is
the necessary Term and Condition of it.*

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For otherwise, the Scriptures must needs contradict themselves, there being so many other places both in the Old and new Testament, where free Pardon and Remission of Sins, is promised to all that are truly penitent.

Jer. 4. 1. Thus the Prophet *Jeremiah*. *If thou wilt return O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me, and if thou wilt put away thine abomination out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.* And the Prophet

Isa. 55. 7. *Isaiah* gives the same Encouragement to Repentance. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Religious good Men under the Law, were so fully satisfy'd of God's Readiness to forgive Sin, that they exhort one another to Repentance, upon the sure Prospect of it. As we read in

Hosea, 6.1. *Hosea, Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

To return to God, supposes that Men were once with him, and belonged to him; and if the Offers of Grace and Forgiveness, are made in Holy Scripture

to those who will return, then it is evident, that they who were once in Christ, and have fallen away from him, shall upon their Repentance, be restored to his Favour, and their Sins (tho' of the deepest dye) shall be done away by Virtue of the Baptismal Covenant, in which on God's Part, Remission of Sins is promised to those, who will forsake them: Otherwise, miserable were the State of Christians, notwithstanding all that our Saviour Christ has done and suffer'd for us: For what Man upon Earth is there so perfect, that he sinneth not? *If we say* ^{1 Ep. Joh.} *that we have no sin, we deceive our selves,* ^{1. 8.} *and the truth is not in us.* But to our unspeakable Comfort, the Mercies of God in his Son Christ Jesus, are a sure Refuge for the greatest Sinner of us all to flee to. And through Faith in his Blood, we may be as sure of his Pardon, as we can be of our own Repentance.

There are two Examples in Holy Scripture, which quite overthrow the *Novatian* Opinion, and plainly teach us, that Relapses into the foulest Sins, do not hinder, but that the Children of God, who have fallen away from him, shall be receiv'd again, and own'd as

Children, if they will repent and return to him.

Act. 13. 22. David was once so highly in God's Favour, that he seems to rejoice and triumph in him. *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who will fulfil all my will.* What greater Commendation can any Man wish for, than this which he had from God himself? and yet so great a Saint, one so ready to perform all the Will of God, committed two such Sins, as ought *scarce to be named amongst Christians*; Adultery and Murder: But no one doubts of David's being pardon'd, and of his dying in God's Peace and Favour.

St. Peter is another Instance of the same Nature. So great was his Faith in owning Christ to be the *Son of the living God*, that upon the account of it, our Saviour pronounced him blessed.

Mat. 16. 17. *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona.* Without question, he was then in a justify'd State; and yet afterwards, in a time of Danger, his Faith and his Courage fail'd him; for he deny'd his Master in the basest manner, with Oaths and Execrations, although he had heard from his own Mouth, *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my father*

father which is in heaven. But so far was he from being cut off from the Mercy of God, that for his Repentance, he was suffer'd to continue in the Office of an Apostle.

And one would have thought that his Remorse for this Sin, together with the plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit, which with the rest of the Apostles, he was made Partaker of, after our Saviour's Ascension, should have kept him stedfast to his Duty, and have strengthened and engaged him to Perseverance in it: But he relaps'd again in so foul a manner, that St. *Paul* rebuked him openly for his Dissimulation. And yet there is no doubt but this Sin was also forgiven him, since he lived and dyed one of the chief Ministers of Christ's Kingdom.

Gal. 2.
But we must take heed that we make not a wrong Use of these Examples of Human Frailty in the best of Men, and of God's Readiness to pardon even the greatest Offences, they are no Encouragement to Sin, but are a very great one to Repentance, by keeping Men from Despair, when their Sins are heightened with the most aggravating Circumstances, of Wilfulness and Ingratitude.

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Let not the Mercy and Forbearance of God, nor the certain Acceptance which a sincere Repentance always finds with him, make Men secure and easie in the Enjoyment of their Vices, as tho' it were in their own Power to repent when they have a mind to it. This Mistake is very pernicious and destructive to the Souls of Men, as being the chief Cause why they defer their Repentance; they look upon it as their own Work, and do not doubt of Strength to go through with it, whenever they set about it. Whereas indeed, it is the Gift and Grace of Almighty God, which he denys or withdraws, according to his own good Pleasure. *Without me, (says our*

Joh. 15.5. Saviour) ye can do nothing. And St. 2Ep. Cor. Paul teaches us, We are not sufficient of

3.5. our selves, to think any thing as of our selves; but our sufficiency is of God. And

Phil. 2.13. again, It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do. The Prophet Jeremiah,

tho' he exhorts the Israelites to return

Jer. 31. unto God, yet he says, Turn thou me, O 48. good Lord, and so shall I be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. And in the

Twenty fourth Chapter, I will give them an heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will

will be their God ; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. Let us therefore earnestly beseech our Heavenly Father, that he would vouchsafe by his Holy Spirit, to work in us a true and unfeigned Repentance, that after the painful Labours and Sorrows of this Life, we may live Eternally with his Son Christ Jesus. To whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be all Glory and Praise, for evermore.

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DISCOURSE V.

A
Second Discourse
On REPENTANCE.

JOEL, ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

And rent your Heart and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

THE Nature of Repentance, having been shewn in the former Discourse on these Words, that it is

the Gift or Work of God in us, whereby we forsake our Sins, and return to him with a lively Faith and fervent Charity ; which will most certainly bring forth such Fruits of good Works, as we know are acceptable to him. That we may the more clearly and fully understand this Duty, it shall now be distinctly consider'd in Four several Parts, which it chiefly consists of.

1. In true Repentance, there must be *an hearty sorrow and contrition for our sins* ; we must grieve in earnest, and bewail our selves, not only for the Danger we run into by them, but chiefly for having offended so gracious a God, who loved us to that Degree, that even whilst we were Enemies to him, he gave his only begotten Son, to dye a most ignominious and painful Death for us : An unfeigned Sorrow for our Sins, grounded upon this Principle of Love and Gratitude to our Maker, is a Sacrifice well-pleasing to him, as the Psalmist tells us. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O Psal. 51: 17. Lord, thou wilt not despise.*

But Sin has this unhappy Power over those who yield themselves Servants to it, that it enslaves their Reason and Under-

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derstanding, and hardens their Consciences, so as to make them utterly insensible both of their Guilt and of their Danger: There must be something stronger than the Dictates of their own Minds, to rouse and awaken them out of their Security, and give them such a Sense of their Condition, as may work in them a *Godly Sorrow and Repentance, not to be repented of.*

David himself, neither felt any Smart, nor shew'd any Remorse of Conscience, for the grievous Sins he had committed of Murder and Adultery, till the Prophet *Nathan* was sent from God to reprove him: We have no need of any such extraordinary Messenger to bring us to Repentance, would we but frequently read and meditate in the Holy Scriptures: That *Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.* It will pierce the Heart, and convince the Sinner of his Folly and Unworthiness; it will reprove him, and set before his Eyes, the things he has done, what Hopes he has forfeited, and what dreadful Punishments he has made himself obnoxious to, without a serious and unfeigned Repentance.

We

We read that at St. Peter's Sermon, the People that heard him, *were pricked* Act. 2. *in their heart.* Why should not the Word of God have the same Effect upon us now, as it then had upon them, if we were as attentive as they, in reading or hearing it preach'd to us? Without doubt, those Jews would have continu'd as secure, and as careless of their Salvation, as unconverted Sinners now are, if God had not powerfully wrought the blessed Change in them, by Means of his Word and of his Spirit.

And this peculiar Benefit we have from the Holy Scripture, that it does not only give Men the Knowledge of Sin, and faithfully represents their Condition to them, which alone would be enough to make wicked Men desperate and disconsolate, and would only raise such a *Sorrow* in them, as *worketh death*; but the Gospel at the same time that it shews Men their Misery, does also direct them in the way to escape it: It mixes Hope and Comfort with that Trouble and Affliction which it gives the Conscience; it opens our Wounds, to the end they may be healed, and the Pain we feel from thence, is the best Sign we can have of our Cure.

2. When

DISCOURSE V.

2. When the Soul is overwhelm'd with Sorrow, and truly humbled with sad Reflections upon her Sins, the next Step she is to make in her Repentance, is freely to confess and acknowledge them

Psal. 147. to Almighty God, who is ready (as David tells us) to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds. This Method the Psalmist himself took; and the good Success he met with from it, may encourage Sinners to follow his Example.

Psal. 32. 5. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid: I said I will confess my Transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the Iniquity of my Sin.

Such Promises are made in Holy Scripture, and such extraordinary Power and Efficacy is ascrib'd to an hearty and unfeigned Confession of Sins, that it might seem the only thing necessary, in order to the obtaining Forgiveness of

¹ Ep. Joh. them. St. John tells us, If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This St. Austin interprets of Confession made to God. And 'tis Presumption for any Man to approach the Throne of Grace, with Prayers and Intercessions for Pardon, without unburthening

thening his Conscience by owning the Faults he has been guilty of, and owning them so as impartially to accuse himself of them, laying them open without any Excuses or Reserve, in their blackest Colours, and most aggravating Circumstances, for the Design of confessing Sins is not to inform God, but to humble our selves for them, and he who is truly humble, would rather make the worst of his Case, than use any Shifts or Pretences either to dissemble or excuse it.

But besides this confessing of Sins to Almighty God, so plainly required in Holy Scripture, which all Men agree to be most fit and reasonable, there is yet another kind of Confession, which S. James exhorts us to make to one another, *Confess your Faults one to another, and pray Jam. 5.16. one for another, that ye may be healed:* Which Words, if they are to be understood of particular Faults, then such are meant as one Man commits against another; from whence proceeds Hatred, Strife, and desire of Revenge. In which Cases, he who gives the Offence, is bound to Confess to the Person he has injured, how he has wrong'd him, whether in his Body, Estate, or Reputation, that so he may obtain

obtain Pardon and Reconciliation for his Fault, not only of his Neighbour, but of God likewise, who will upon no other Terms be reconciled to him ; to which

Mat. 5. 23. agrees our Saviour's Advice. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.*

That Man must be of an implacable Temper, who peevishly refuses to forgive his Neighbour when he so humbles himself before him, as to confess the Wrongs he has done, and to declare his Readiness to make him all reasonable Satisfaction for them. This is very probably the Sense of St. James's Exhortation, if his Words are meant of particular Sins ; but they may be very well taken in another Sense, *viz.* That we confess to one another in general that we are grievous Sinners, that whatever good Opinion the World may have of us, we are really no better than other Men, we are clothed with the same Infirmities, and subject to the same Temptations as others are, and if we have not yet been prevail'd with to comply with them

them so grossly and impudently as some others may have done, yet in *many* *Things we offend all*, and we have too great a *Beam in our own Eyes to be able to discern whether our Brother has a greater Beam in his Eye*. We ought therefore jointly to beg each others Prayers for the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to strengthen us against all Temptations, and to keep us firm and steadfast to our Duty, that notwithstanding the Frailty of our Nature, we may all obtain that Salvation which Christ with the Price of his Blood hath purchased for us.

Indeed, the Church of *Rome* puts a quite different Construction upon those Words of St. *James*, 'tis upon this Place chiefly that they ground the necessity of Auricular Confession, although we find no mention made in it either of a *Priest*, or of *Absolution*, we are exhorted to *pray one for another*; but if this be to *absolve*, then they put the Power of *Absolution* into the Hands of the People, for it is here mutually required of each Party, as well they who confess, as they to whom the Confession is made, are bid to *pray one for the other*.

But

But tho' there is so little Ground in Scripture for Auricular Confession, and very many and great Inconveniencies attend the Practice of it, yet it turns so much to the Honour and Interest of the Priesthood in the Church of *Rome*, that they will in no wise part with it, but alledge in its Defence those Words of our

Mat. 8. 4. Saviour, *Go thy way, shew thy self to the Priest*; little considering that the Person there spoke to was cleansed of his Leprosie before this Charge was given him. If our Sins are in like manner forgiven by God, upon confessing them to him, to what purpose is it to make Confession of them to the Priest afterwards?

'Tis at best a weak way of reasoning to draw Arguments from Similes and Metaphors, but in this Case their own Weapons are turned against them, for the Argument they make use of, plainly confutes the Doctrine they would establish by it.

Better is the Sense which St. *Ambrose* gives of those Words, Who is the Priest we are to shew our selves to, if thereby is meant confessing our Sins? but he who is the true Priest, the Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedeck. None but Christ himself, the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls,

Souls, who offered himself up a Sacrifice to atone for the Sins of all Mankind, is able to wash and cleanse us from our Sins, and grant us full Pardon and Remission of them. *Therefore, says St. Austin, what have I to do with Men that they should hear my Confession, as though they were able to heal my Diseases?*

Not but that Men are bound in Prudence to Consult and Advise with their Pastor, or some other Learned and Discreet Minister of God's Word, and to open their Consciences to him when they labour under Doubts and Scruples which they cannot otherwise satisfie, that so their Minds may be quieted and composed by the good Counsel they may hope to receive, and by the Comfort of God's Word, administred by those whom God has Authorized and Appointed to declare and interpret his Will out of it, but to be obliged to a particular Recital of every Sin to what Person soever, is against the Liberty of Christians, there being no Ground or Foundation for it in Holy Scripture: If it were enjoin'd by Christ or his Apostles, it could in no Case be laid aside or dispense with, but we find in Ecclesiastical History, that it was put down at *Constantinople* by *Nectarius Bishop*

DISCOURSE IV.

shop of that Place, by Reason of several great Inconveniencies which proceeded from it.

3dly, Another thing required in our Repentance is *Faith*, or a stedfast Reliance upon Almighty God for the Performance of the gracious Promises he has made us of free Pardon and Forgiveness of Sins through the Merits and Satisfaction of Christ Jesus. This is so absolutely required in our Repentance, that it is the chief or first moving Principle, which sets all the other Parts of it on working; for why are we sorry for our Sins? Or to what purpose should we go about to confess them to Almighty God, if we did not firmly believe that God will forgive us our Sins, and take us into his Favour for the sake of Christ's Sufferings and Obedience.

Without Faith we find all the other Parts of Repentance to be vain and ineffectual: The Schoolmen allow it these Three Parts only, Contrition, or a hearty unfeigned Sorrow; Confession, or a free Acknowledgment of our Sins, and Satisfaction as far as it is in our Power to make it. But *Judas* repented after this sort, and yet received no Benefit from It. His Sorrow was so great, that it
made

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made his Life an intolerable Burthen, and he went and haridg himself: He made an open Confession of his Faults to the Chief Priests and Elders, in such a manner as must needs incense and provoke them. *I have sinned* (says he) *in that I have betrayed the Innocent Blood.* Were not they equally guilty who had condemned and were resolved to crucifie him? He yet farther made what Satisfaction he could for his Villany, he gave them back again the Thirty Pieces of Silver with which he had been tempted to betray him. What was wanting to compleat such a Repentance but Faith only? But through this Deficiency it ended in Despair and his utter Ruin.

Whereas St. Peter, who was guilty of a Crime of the highest Nature, denying his Master with Oaths and Execrations; yet immediately coming to himself, and weeping bitterly for his Sin, and laying hold of the Mercies of God by a lively Faith, found Favour and Acceptance with him; there is little Difference to be perceived between his Repentance, and that of *Judas*, but that the one thought his Sin to be too great for Pardon, and so despair'd of it; but the other, tho' he knew the heinousness of his Sin, yet

H 2 humbled

humbled himself for it, and believed the Mercy of God and the Merits of his Saviour to be greater, which Faith encouraged him to proceed in his Repentance till he obtain'd his Pardon; and he shew'd the Sincerity of it in bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance; for, *as much had been forgiven him by his Master, so he loved him much.*

4thly. And this is the Fourth thing required in Repentance, or rather 'tis the Fruit of it, or infallible Sign of its Sincerity, if Men grow more careful in their Obedience. If they become New Creatures, and study to please and Glorifie God by their good Works. This Advice *John the Baptist* gave to the *Pharisees* and *Saduces* when they came to be baptized of him, bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. Unless they did so, their Baptism would avail them little, for they should not escape the Wrath to come.

Mat. 3. 7. They who are unfeignedly sorry for their Sins, will be as ready to forsake them, and to avoid all the Occasions by which they were led into them, and if such a real Change be wrought in their Minds as the Word *Repentance* μετάνοια in the Original importeth: They will put on all such Habits as are contrary to their

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their former Vices: instead of that Uncleanness, Malice or Covetousness they were before addicted to, they will set themselves to lead such innocent, holy, and charitable Lives, as will make them approved of by God, and exemplary and profitable to their Brethren.

There are not wanting in Holy Scripture, Examples of such blessed Fruits of a true Conversion, *Zacheus* was ready to make a *four-fold Restitution* of the Wealth he had gotten by Fraud or false Accusation. This was a good Proof of his Love to Justice, and his Charity was no less visible, *half of his Goods he bestowed* Luke 19. 8. upon the poor.

The sinful Woman, who in all Probability was an Harlot, became a true Convert and Disciple of our Saviour's; and these were the Signs and Fruits of her Repentance, she express'd her Sorrow by the Abundance of Tears which she shed, she also shew'd her Humility, and her Love of Christ, by washing his Feet with them, wiping them with the Hairs of her Head, and anointing them with her precious Ointment. Our Saviour indeed tells her it was her Faith Ver. 50. which saved her; but it was such a Faith as worketh by Love, and shew'd by the

Fruits of it that she was become a New Creature.

The several Parts of a true Repentance being thus explain'd, I proceed to shew what Reasons or Motives there are to encourage every Man seriously and diligently to set about it.

1. There are many earnest Exhortations and strict Commands in Holy Scripture, given by God himself, for the Performance of this Duty: He invites the Israelites to it in a most affectionate manner. *Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed against me, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* And in *Hosea, O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.*

'Tis great Folly and Ingratitude in us, ever to have forsaken the Will and Law of our Creator, but to refuse his gracious Calls of returning to him, to neglect to obey, when he commands us only not to ruin our selves utterly, discovers such Stubborness in our Rebellion against

against him, as deservedly cuts us off from any Share in the Enjoyment of his Glory ; and will bring that Ruin upon us, which we foolishly made our own Choice : Tho' it be greater than we can conceive or imagine it to be, even eternal Destruction in the *lakes of fire and brimstone, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

2. To encourage our Repentance, God has frequently declar'd, that if it be sincere, it shall obtain our Pardon and Reconciliation with him : 'Tis the Condition upon which he promises Remission of Sins under the Gospel. And before our Saviour's Appearance in the Flesh, the Jews had the same Promises annex'd to this Duty. As we read in *Ezekiel*. *If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* Ezek. 18. 21.

3. The Filthiness and Deformity of Sin, should make Men desirous to be cleansed and purged of it, by an unfeigned Repentance. 'Twas *Plato's* saying, That if Men could but see the Ugliness of Vice, they would hate and avoid it, as they would do Poyson : There are many Considerations that should make

it much more detestable to a Christian than it could be to a Heathen: We know that it makes a Separation between God and our Souls. If an Impenitent Sinner presumes to approach him with Prayers and Intercessions, he hideth away his Face, he will not hear, he withdraws his Presence from such Wretches in this Life, and 'tis the irreversible Law of his Kingdom, the New Jerusalem, that *no unclean thing shall enter therein*. There is yet one Reason which alone might convince us of the odious Nature of Sin, and the dreadful Effects of it, that nothing less than the Blood of the Son of God, could atone, or satisfy for it.

Were it then as necessary for us to appear in the Presence of an Earthly Prince, as it is to make our Addresses at the Throne of Grace, Should we not carefully put away from us, whatsoever things were likely to be offensive to the Majesty we approach? Let us have the same Regard to the Majesty of God, and the whole Court of Heaven, as we have to that of an Earthly Monarch; and there needs no other Argument to convince us of the Necessity of parting with our Sins, and becoming New Creatures.

There

There is a Natural Shame attending upon Sin, which arises from the inward Sense we have of its Indecency and Deformity. Men who have not renounced all Modesty, are desirous to conceal their Faults, and are abash'd at their first Discovery ; but if our Sins are made never so Publick to Men, who are Sinners like our selves, this is not to be compared with that Confusion we shall be under, when they are brought in Judgment before God and his Holy Angels.

4. The Frailty and Uncertainty of our Lives, which depend so absolutely upon God's good Pleasure, that when he thinks fit he takes them away from us, allowing us no Security of our Abode here, no not for a Moment ; Death being very often sent to summon us to Judgment, without giving the least Notice before-hand of its Approaches : This should make us serious and early in our Repentance, that whenever we depart hence, we may chearfully submit our selves to the Will of God, being assured of his Peace and Favour.

If we have not taken care to be reconcil'd to him, how dreadful is the Consideration of giving an account of our selves in Judgment ! For so it is, the Condition

Condition we are found in when Death seizes us, is that which we are accountable for at God's Tribunal: As the Malice of Men or Devils, can make it no worse than it is, so all our Endeavours, our Prayers or Intercessions, cannot make

Eccles. 11. it better, as the Preacher tells us.

3. *the tree falleth, whether it be towards the south or towards the north, in the place where it falleth there shall it be.* For which reason, the Son of Sirach gives

Eccl. 5. us this excellent Advice. *Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off*

7. *from day to day, for suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed, and perish in the day of vengeance.* In the Words

immediately before these, he takes away all imaginable Pretences that Men make use of for delaying their Repentance: He bids them not trust to their Wealth or Strength, or to the Experience they have hitherto had of God's Long-Suffering or Forbearance; or to the false Notions or Opinions they are prepossess'd with concerning his Mercy: A Man can never answer to himself why he neglects this Duty, and God will not allow of any Excuse for it.

Whenever

Whenever therefore we perceive that we are moved and excited to so good a Work, either by the Preaching of God's Holy Word, or by the Influences of his Spirit, we ought in Wisdom, immediately to set about it, least otherwise, when we our selves could wish that we might repent, we should want the Power or Opportunity of performing it: For Repentance being the Gift of God, to refuse his Gifts is so high a Contempt, as may provoke him never to make us any farther Offers of them. 'Tis fit that we should readily obey the Spirit of God, and not think that he must wait our Leisure, and hold forth his Graces till we please to make use of them.

Lastly, The heavy Judgments which God has threatned against Impenitency, both in this Life and that which is to come, should quicken our Resolutions and Endeavours of returning to him. Tis against those that were hardned and would not repent, that the Prophet Jeremiah denounces the severe Threatning. *I will deliver them to be removed* Jer. 24.9.
into all Kingdoms of the Earth, for their
burt; to be a reproach and a proverb, a
taunt and a curse, in all places whither I
shall drive them: And I will send the
sword,

sword, the famine and the pestilence amongst them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them, and to their Fathers. But what are these Temporal Calamities, if compared with the Punishments reserv'd for them in the Life to come? Of which the Apostle speaks.

Rom. 2. 5. After their hardness and impenitent heart, they treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.

Let these Terrors of the Lord persuade Men to consult their Safety, and return to him: We have on the other hand, all the Encouragement we could desire to invite us to it. If we will lay hold on his Mercy, upon those Terms he has prescribed in his Gospel, a Lively Faith and an Unfeigned Repentance, the Blood of his Son Christ Jesus will cleanse us from all Iniquity, and he will vouchsafe to us all the Marks of his Favour, in giving us those good things which he sees convenient for us here, and crowning our Obedience with eternal Weights of Glory, in his Heavenly Kingdom hereafter.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VI.

Against IDLENESS.

2 THES. iii. 10.

We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

TH O' Man be Born to Labour, fitted and design'd by Almighty God for some Calling or Employment, yet there is nothing we are more inclin'd to than Rest and Ease. *Idleness*, tho' it be directly contrary to the State of Life which God has appointed for us, is so little look'd upon as a Fault, that Men think it their greatest Happiness to arrive to such a Condition as will afford to maintain them in it. 'Tis a creditable and fashionable Vice;

Vice; the Wealthy take to it as their Due; most Men wish for it, and propose it as the End of all their Industry and Labours.

It is therefore fit that in this Particular, Men should be reminded and admonish'd of their Duty, that they should be made to understand that they are bound to Labour, not only when Necessity drives them to it, but by Virtue of God's Command; who requires that every Man should apply himself to some honest Calling or Business: And as an idle Course of Life is attended with unspeakable Mischiefs and Inconveniences, so Labour and Industry being of God's own Appointment for us, are bless'd by him with the greatest Advantages.

Now that Man was ordain'd by God to Labour and Employment, may appear from his Natural Frame and Structure; from the Faculties and Powers both of his Mind and Body, which are most admirably fitted and contrived for that Purpose, and from the Exigencies of Life, as they are at present order'd by Providence. Nay, it appears from the Condition Man was in at his very first Creation, whilst he continued in a State of Innocence and Purity, even then God put him

Against IDLENESS. III

him into the Garden which he had planted, not only to enjoy the Pleasures of it, but *to keep it and dress it.*

Gen. 2.15.

And when he had transgress'd the Command of God by eating the forbidden Fruit, and for his Disobedience was turn'd out of Paradise, then the severe Sentence was pronounced against him.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground. Gen. 3.19.

Which Words are indeed a Curse, but they seem also to carry in them the Force of a Precept, enjoining *Adam* and all his Posterity, to take Pains for their Livelyhood, to employ themselves diligently one way or other for their own Support, and for the Profit of others who might stand in need of their Help.

Wherefore the Son of *Sirach* advises Men, *Not to hate laborious work, neither husbandry, for the most high hath ordained* Ecclius. 7. 15. *them.* The Wise Man also exhorts us to the same Purpose. *Drink Waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well:* Intimating, that Men ought to live of their own Labours, and not devour in Idleness and Luxury, the Fruits of other Mens.

The Apostle in the Text, commands the *Theffalonians* to withdraw themselves from

from those Men who lived so disorderly as to take no Pains for an honest Livelyhood, who did no Work at all, but (as 'tis usual for such Men) they were *Busie-Bodies*, meddling in every Mans Affairs, to judge and censure them. He presseth them very earnestly, commanding and exhorting them by our *Lord Jesus Christ*, that they would find themselves other sort of Business; that they would work with quietness, and eat their own bread, and not be weary in well doing; for so he calls every innocent, useful Employment: But if they should refuse to follow his Advice, he requires it of other Men, to discountenance them all they can, by avoiding their Company; and not only so, but by withholding all Pity and Compassion from them, not to think it any matter of Charity to relieve them; but if the Command of God has no Influence upon them, Necessity must compel them: For *if they will not work, neither shall they eat.*

But this is not to be understood absolutely of bodily Labour, that no one shall eat who is not that way employ'd; for there are Labours of several Kinds, some whereof exercise the Mind, others the Body, and there are some which equally

equally proceed from the Faculties of both.

Whoever does good to the State of which he is a Member, by a Prudent and Faithful Administration of its Government, or by a diligent discharging of his Duty in any Office he bears, or any Place of Trust that he is call'd to ; whoever is serviceable to others in assisting them with good Counsel in doubtful and difficult Cases relating to their Souls, Bodies or Estates ; whoever is taken up in instructing the Ignorant, or in any other such Matters which require the Pains of the Mind, that Person is so far from being idle, or deserving to be reputed so, or to be look'd upon as unworthy of a Livelihood, that as his Labour is really the most difficult, so is it the most useful, and most Honourable. This is S. Paul's Judgment with respect to the Pastoral Office ; they that Labour in the Word and Doctrine, shall be accounted worthy of *double Honour*, that is, they deserve a more than ordinary Reward, which he proves from the Words of Christ himself, *The Labourer* Mat. 10.
is worthy of his Meat. 10.

But for those who are no way serviceable or assisting to others, who spend

I their

their Time either in doing nothing, or in what they ought not to do. S. Paul has so ill an Opinion, and so little Charity for them, that he will not suffer them to be maintained by the Alms of the Church: However, their Poverty might otherwise recommend them thereto, as particularly in the Cases of Widows, he charges *Timothy* to refuse such as were

⁷ Tim. 5. *Idle, wandring about from House to House,*
^{13.} *and not only Idle, but Tatlers and busie*
Bodies, speaking Things which they ought
not.

There needs no other Proof of the heinousness of this Sin of *Idleness*, than the terrible Judgments which God inflicted upon *Sodom* for it. The Prophet *Ezekiel* reckons it amongst the grievous Provocations which brought down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven upon that

Ezek. 16. *City; Behold this was the Iniquity of So-*
^{49.} *dom, Pride, Fulness of Bread, and abundance of Idleness was in her and in her*
Daughters, that is, in the neighbouring
Cities that were subject to her, the
dreadful Overthrow which befel them
ought to be a Warning to every Man,
more-especially to beware of such Sins
as are declared to have been the Causes
of it.

Christians

Christians have Reason to expect much greater Judgments, if they give themselves up to Sloth and Idleness, and content themselves to live like Drones upon the Fruits of other Mens Labour and Industry, as they wilfully Transgress the Command of God, and frustrate the Designs and Intentions of his Providence, so hereafter they shall be called to a strict Account for the Time they have mis-spent, and the Talents they have wasted, and shall have their Portion with the unprofitable Servant in outer ^{Matt. 25:30} Darkness, where there is Eternal Weeping ³⁰⁵ and gnashing of Teeth.

There are innumerable Mischiefs and Inconveniencies which in this Life attend upon Idleness; Poverty is almost a necessary Consequent of it, 'tis a diligent Hand as Solomon teacheth us, which ^{Prov. 10:4} maketh rich. *He that tilleth his Land shall have Plenty of Bread, but he that followeth after vain Persons shall have Poverty enough; the Sluggard will not Plow by Reason of the Cold, therefore shall he beg in Harvest and have nothing.* ^{Prov. 28:19.} ^{Prov. 20:4.}

"Tis needless to bring Proofs where our own Experience and Observation may very easily convince us; for from whence proceeds so great an Increase of the poor

of this Kingdom? What are their Miseries owing to but *Sloth* and *Idleness*? Chiefly to be ascribed to the neglect of Parents, who took no care to Educate them when they were young in Learning or Labour, in some honest Way of Trade or Business, in which they might employ themselves when they were grown up, and be able to provide an honest Livelihood and Subsistence.

But suppose a Man were born to, or has by his Industry obtained so plentiful an Estate, that if he should take his Ease, or indulge himself (as too many do) in Sloth and Luxury, there would be no Danger of his falling into Poverty, yet in all Probability he would thereby render his Condition as unhappy as that of the meanest Beggar, he would lose even the Taste and Relish of sensual Enjoyments, by too frequent a Use of them, and would most certainly endanger his Health, by an idle, unactive way of Living, for 'tis known by Experience, that Ease and Sleep, and want of Exercise are the chief Causes of most bodily Indispositions and Diseases.

But what are the Mischiefs which happen either to our Bodies or Estates, if compared with those Evils which

Idleness

Idleness brings upon the Soul? 'Tis a sort of Lethargy upon the Mind, a Disease bad enough of it self, but yet 'tis seldom alone, 'tis for the most part accompany'd with a Train of other Vices, as the Son of *Sirach* tells us, *It teacheth Ecclus. 31. much Evil*; and *S. Bernard* calls it the ^{27.} *Mother of all Evils*, and *Step-Dame of all Virtues*, and says of it, that it prepares and treads the Way to Hell-Fire.

Where it is once indulged, the Devil soon possesses himself of such a Soil, and is ready to plant all manner of Wickedness in it, as appears from the Parable, *Whilst Men slept the Enemy Mat. 13. came and sowed his Tares*. Then we give ^{25.} him the greatest Advantage against us; then is the most proper Time for his Snares and Temptations to succeed in, when we are asleep, when the best Powers of our Souls are as it were bound up and stupify'd with Ease and *Idleness*.

This we learn more particularly from Two Examples in Holy Scripture. *David* is one of them, *Who stay'd at Home in 2 Sam. 11. Jerusalem at the time when Kings go forth to Battle*, leaving the Conduct of his Army (which ought to have been his own proper Charge) *to Joab and his Servants*. When he thus gave himself

up to Ease and Rest, the Devil laid hold of the Opportunity, and prevailed with him to commit Two of the greatest Sins, *Murder* and *Adultery*, for which God pronounced the severe Sentence against him by the Prophet *Nathan*, *The Sword shall never depart from thine House.*

*2 Sam. 12.
10.*

Another Instance of this kind is that of *Sampson*, who was invincible so long as he kept himself employ'd in that Work to which God had designed him, which was warring with the *Philistins*; but when his Mind was soften'd with the Love of Ease and Pleasure, he committed Fornication with *Dalilah*, and for his Punishment, was soon after betray'd by her with whom he had sinn'd, so that his Enemies took a cruel Revenge upon him, and he who before was so terrible to them, was look'd upon as one who was only fit to be made Sport with.

If *David* and *Sampson*, who were both of them so highly favoured by God as to be endow'd with extraordinary Gifts of his Divine Spirit, the one with that of Prophesie, the other with wonderful Personal Strength and Courage; if such Men whom no Dangers or Difficulties, no Toils or Labour could ever conquer, were subdued by their own Lusts, as soon

soon as they allowed themselves in Ease and Idleness, if they fell so deeply under God's Displeasure for the Sins they were thereby betray'd into, we have the greatest Reason to conclude of all Slothful Persons, that they lie exposed to all Manner of Wickedness, and that God's severest Judgments are reserved for them.

'Tis in vain for Men to excuse or flatter themselves, that in doing nothing they do no Harm, it being on the contrary very rightly observed, that they who do nothing, are at Leisure to learn and practice all kind of Evil.

The Devil himself is never idle, S. Peter tells us, *Like a roaring Lion he goeth about seeking whom he may devour*, ^{1 Ep. 5.8.} _{Ephes. 4.28.} ought not we to be as watchful and diligent to save our selves, as he is to destroy us? To be continually employed in some honest Action or other, in the Duties of Religion, or in the Works of our Calling, is the best guard we can have against him, whose Snares do seldom succeed when our Thoughts are taken up and intent upon other Busines; but if a Man through Laziness or want of Employment be once reduced to Poverty, if having never been bred to any Trade or Calling he finds no way to turn himself

to for an Honest Livelihood, he becomes an easie Prey to our common Adversary, yielding to every Temptation which offers it self to him ; hence it is that so many Men take the most unlawful Courses to maintain themselves by, they will not stick to lye or forswear, to cheat or bear false Witness, or even sometimes to steal and murder for a present Substance, though they lose the Quiet and Peace of their Consciences, and very often their Lives by it, and are sure without Repentance to lose the Favour of God, and that his Vengeance will one Day meet with them for their Villanies.

Such are the Fruits of this Sin of *Idleness*, 'tis attended with all the Mischiefs one can suffer in this Life, with the loss of every thing that is dear or valuable in it, and in the Life to come (unless God by his great Mercy Reforms and Pardons such Wretches) eternal Destruction must be the Reward of it.

A perfect Insight into the Dangers proceeding from this Sin, has made many wise and well-govern'd States to endeavour (if it were possible) to prevent and reclaim it. In *Egypt* every Man was obliged by Law to bring his Name every Week to the chief Magistrate of the

the Place where he lived, certifying withal in what Trade or Calling he employ'd himself, that so the idle might be severely punish'd, and the diligent encouraged and rewarded. Amongst the *Athenians* the Slothful were esteem'd and punish'd as the most heinous Offenders. The *Areopagites* would make Men give an Account how they lived, and they who were found to be no way serviceable to the Publick, were banish'd as unprofitable Members.

In this Realm of ours very good Provision has been made to the same Purpose. If the Laws against Vagrants and common Beggars were but duly executed amongst us, if they were not suffer'd to pass from Town to Town without such Correction as is appointed for them, we might hope to see Laziness as much discouraged in our own Country as it is in some others that are near us; for although good Men are too apt to hearken to the false Pretences of such Loiterers, and out of natural Compassion to think well of them, and to relieve them, yet our Laws look with an impartial Eye upon them, and judge them to be what they really are, the very Bane and Pest of Society, wasting and devouring the Fruits

Fruits of the diligent Man's Labours, robbing those who are poor indeed of the Charity which is their due, and which would otherwise be afforded them, and all the while doing no sort of Service to God, their Prince, or their Country; but what is still worse, spending the Time which lies upon their Hands in the most profligate Courses of Lying, Swearing and Drinking, in committing sometimes the most enormous Crimes of Theft, Whoredom and Murder, for how should it be otherways, but that Men who live without fear of Laws or Sense of Shame, must use the Leisure and Opportunities they have, in contriving or practising all Kinds of Wickedness?

Let this be a Warning to all Parents, and to such as are entrusted with the Care and Government of Youth, that they season their Minds with sound Principles of Religion and good Morality; and not only so, but bring them up either to Learning, or in some honest Trade and Employment, that when they are grown up, they may be able by their own Skill and Industry to provide a competent Maintenance for themselves, and to afford some Supply and Relief to the

the real Wants and unavoidable Necessities of their Brethren, as St. Paul adviseth, *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands* Ephes. 4: 28.

Hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth; and for an Encouragement to it, *David* thinks it a great Happiness (as it really is) for a Man to live upon his own Labours.

Thou shalt eat the Labours of thine Hand, Psal. 128: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well 2. with thee.

'Tis so great a Happiness, that *Solomon* does not doubt to call it the *Gift of God, for a Man to eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his Labour*. Such a one reaps the Fruit of his Pains and Industry with a quiet Conscience, a Pleasure which the Cheat and Oppressor are altogether unacquainted with; he is free from Contention, from Vexatious Suits and Disturbances; the Envy or Ambition of others can have no Designs, nor take Advantage against him, who possessest no more than what he labours for; he is no Man's Vassal or Dependant; he is under no Temptation to Flattery or sordid Compliances; he needs not cringe or sneak to the Wealthy for his Bread, who can live upon his own, and is able

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in some Measure to relieve others, and what is the greatest Blessing, his continual Employment keeps him out of the Way of those numerous Temptations and Occasions of Sin which idle Persons are always exposed to.

But of all Sorts of *Idleness*, that of Artificers or Labourers is certainly the most blameable, who loiter away that Time for which they receive Wages: This is a down-right Cheat upon those whose Business they have undertaken, 'tis robbing them of their Money, and may prove more injurious than common Robbery, if the Affairs they are intrusted with should miscarry through their Carelessness; God, who will not suffer the labouring Man to be defrauded of

8. Jam. 5.4. his Hire, but declares, that the Cry of such *Injustice* ascends up to him for Vengeance, does as much abhor any Fraud that is committed on the Labourer's Part. St. Paul therefore commands

8. Thess. 4. 6. Christians, *That no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any Matter*; and surely all Eye-Servants, all who receive Wages for their Time, if they squander it away in *Idleness*, are guilty of the greatest Fraud; but let them consider what the Apostle there adds, *The Lord is the Avenger of all such.* The

The honest and industrious Labourer, besides that he has the Comfort of a good Conscience, which is of all others the greatest Happiness, may entirely depend upon the Goodness of God, that he will always take Care of him; God will bless and prosper him in the Work of his Hands, and whenever his Strength fails him through Sickness, Old Age, or Misfortunes, let him not doubt but he shall be provided for in such a manner as shall be best for him, God will stir up the Hearts of good Men to assist and relieve him, which they will be the willinger to do, rememb'ring how diligent and industrious he had been in the Time of his Health and Strength, and how Faithful to those who employ'd him; there is no one, High or Low, Master, Servant or Labourer, but ought to consider how he stands obliged to lay aside all Dissimulation and Deceit, to use Truth and Plainness as well in his Actions as in his Words, upon the Apostle's Reason, the Force of which reaches every Christian, *We are Members one of another.*

Eph. 4.25.

And here it might not be unseasonable to reprove the *Sloth* and *Idleness* which is too commonly seen amongst great Mens Servants; they generally have

have much Time to spare from their Masters Business and necessary Attendance; if they had any Consideration, one would think they should spend those Leisure Hours (which lie so heavy upon their Hands) as well as they could for their future Advantage, that they would study to improve themselves in some creditable Art or useful Knowledge, that so they might be the better fitted for any other Service, if they should happen to lose that they are in, or might be in some Way of getting a Livelihood, if ever their Necessities should require it; but they commonly live without thinking, neither considering that they hold their Places by an uncertain Tenure, nor that Age and Infirmities insensibly steal upon them.

Time is the most valuable Talent we are intrusted with, it was never designed to be spent in Drowsiness, or in ill Company, in Gaming or Revelling, or such other Diversions as young Men waste it in without any serious Thoughts or Reflections. Solomon sarcastically advises

Eccles. 11. them to *rejoice in their Youth, to let their Heart cheer them in the Days of their Youth, to walk in the Ways of their Heart, and in the sight of their Eyes,* but

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in the Conclusion he gives them to understand, that for all these Things God will bring them into Judgment. It were well if they who have the Charge of Youth would take more Care of them than they do of themselves, and allow them no idle Time or Opportunities for such Courses as they are too apt to take to; 'tis no indifferent Matter, but what God expects from them, under Pain of his heaviest Displeasure; if Parents or Masters neglect to redress so great an Evil as that of *Idleness* in their Families, the Magistrate himself is obliged to look after it, since it is a Vice not only destructive to Mens Souls, but it tends to the publick Dishonour of God, and the ruin of Societies. If Men in Authority will rise up with Courage, and execute the Laws upon those who are guilty of it, they may hope to remove the Wrath of God, and make those useful Members to their Country, who before were a Disgrace and a Burthen to it; and if we thus consult the Honour of God, as well as the Publick Interest, we need not doubt but he will confirm his Covenant of Peace with us for ever.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VII.

Against Drunkenness.

EPH. V. 18.

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.

THE Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, (says the Apostle) or which is the same thing, the Gospel of our Saviour Christ, teaches us, *That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, as well as righteously and godlily in this present world.* Sobriety is the Guard of all Virtue and Religion; as on the other Hand, *Drunkenness exposes Men to all the Assaults and Temptations of our Adversary the Devil, Who goeth about like a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour:* And finding Men so unarm'd of Reason and the Assurances of God's Grace, he easily succeeds, in his

his malicious Designs upon them. The Temptation which comes in the Drunkard's way, be it what it will, can hardly fail of its Effect, there being no Power from within to withstand it. But if Death, (to which we are subject every Moment of our Lives) should happen to surprize the Drunkard in the very Act of his Intemperance, how dreadful are the Consequences of it! Of all other Sins, this of Drunkenness making Men the most unfit to give an Account of themselves in Judgment.

Wherefore our Saviour Christ gives this Warning to his Disciples, *Take heed Luk. 21:3 to your selves, least at any time your hearts 34. be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.* And in St. Luke, he gives an Instance of a wicked Servant, *Who should say in his heart my Luk. 21:4. Lord delayeth his coming; and thereupon domineers over his Fellow-Servants, and falls to eating and drinking so as to be drunken. The Lord of that servant (says he) will come in a day when he looked not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware; and will cut him in funder, and appoint him his portion with Unbelievers:* Wherein he only declares what we see

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by our own Experience, that the Sin of Drunkenness does often hurry Men to Judgment, when they are the most unprepared for it.

And how provoking a Sin it is in the Eyes of God, may appear from the Woes and Threatnings denounced against it in

Luk. 6. 25. Holy Scripture. *Woe unto you that are full, (says our Saviour) for ye shall hunger.* Which is to be understood both of the miserable Estate of the Intemperate in the World to come, where they are not allowed so much as *one drop of water to cool their tongue*; and also in this Life it very often so happens, that God withdraws his Temporal Blessings from those who have used them to Excel; and so they perish with Hunger, who were not content to use the good things of this Life

Prov. 23. 20. *with Sobriety and Moderation. Be not amongst wine-bibers, (says Solomon) amongst riotous eaters of flesh, for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.* And

Joel, 1. 5. the Prophet Joel cries out, *Awake ye drunkards, and weep and howl all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.* And thus Almighty God punish'd our first Parents for obeying the Will of the Flesh, their sensual Appetite, contrary to his express Command;

Against DRUNKENNESS. 131

Command ; he depriv'd them of all that Ease and Plenty which they enjoy'd in Paradise, and forced them to earn the *bread they were to eat, with the sweat of their brows.* And can there be a juster Judgment, than that they (who waste and abuse the good things which God gave them for their Nourishment and Support) should afterwards be deny'd even the moderate and convenient Use of such Enjoyments ?

The Prophet *Isaiah* does also denounce a Woe against this sort of Sinners. *Woe Ch. 5. 11.*
unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, and continue until night till wine inflame them ; and the harp, and the viol, and the tabret and pipe are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Men are here upbraided by the Prophet with one very ill Effect of their feasting to Excels ; that it renders them ungrateful to their Maker, and averse to the Performance of all religious Duties. They forget the Person from whom they receive such Blessings, as if they had nothing more to do than to enjoy them ; they do not consider (says the Prophet, that they are *the operation of God's hands* ;

Or as the Apostle tells us of Meats and
Tim. 4. Drinks, that *they are the works of God
created by him, to be received with thank-
giving of them who believe and know the
truth.* But if they have any Thoughts
of God, if at their luxurious Entertain-
ments they make any mention of his
Holy Name, 'tis only to dishonour and
affront it by blasphemous Reflections,
or horrid Oaths and Execrations.

There being so much Impiety and In-
gratitude towards Almighty God, for
the most Part accompanying this Sin
of Luxury and Intemperance, 'tis no
Wonder that in his Holy Word he has
declared himself so severely against it;
and his great Detestation and Abhor-
rence of this Sin, may yet farther ap-
pear from the particular Judgments he
has in this Life inflicted upon it.

The Prophet *Ezekiel* tells us what was
the Cause of the dreadful Overthrow of
Ch. 16. 49. *Sodom, and the Cities about her. Ful-
ness of bread, that is luxury, and abund-
ance of Idleness was in her;* for which
Reason God rained down upon her Fire
and Brimstone, the very Ingredients of
Hell Torments.

There are many Instances in Sacred and
Profane History, of Men who lost their
Lives

Lives in their Fits of Drunkenness, which is no more than what may ordinarily be expected from this Vice; and 'tis rather a Wonder that there are not more such Examples, it being the Nature of it to provoke both God and Man, and to throw Men into Danger, when it has disabled all the Powers both of Mind and Body, and so made them unfit to guard themselves against it.

It is observable of this Sin, that whenever God has suffer'd his Servants to fall into it, it has been attended either with some remarkable Disgrace and Mischief, or has led them into such farther Wickedness, as they could not otherwise be supposed to have committed: When *Noah* was overcome with Drink, he exposed his Nakedness to his own Children, which must needs have lessened their Esteem for him, and weaken'd his paternal Authority over them. *Lot*, who was so good a Man, that the Scriptures give him the Character of *Righteous Lot*, when he was deceiv'd into the same Condition, committed Incest with his own Daughters, and so raised up a Generation that were inveterate Enemies and Scourges of God's People.

One would scarce have thought it possible for the Children of Israel, after so many Miracles as they had seen wrought for their Deliverance out of Egypt, to have fallen away into the Sin of Idolatry, but we find the Occasion of it; when they were to sacrifice to the Calf,

Exod. 32. *they did first eat and drink, and rose up to play.* Luxury and Intemperance were the Fore-runners, if not the Cause of their Sin.

God indeed tempteth no Man himself, but when for some grievous Provocation he suffers Men to be tempted, he lets them put themselves into such a Condition, as gives the Tempter the greatest Opportunities and Advantages against them. And a Fit of Drunkenness is certainly the most proper time for him, when the Use and Command of Reason is lost, the Sense of Conscience extinguish'd, and the Presence of God's Holy Spirit is removed and banish'd from the Soul. What Folly and Wickedness are not Men capable of at such Times? When *the light within them is darkness*, (says our Saviour) *how great is that darkness?*

But to expose this Sin in its proper Colours, that Men may be prevail'd with

with to detest and shun it, we shall consider those Mischiefs which do most commonly, and some of them even naturally, proceed from it.

And these are such as either are hurtful *to our neighbours, or our selves.*

The Mischiefs which Drunkenness does to a Man's self, regard *his Body, his Mind, or his Estate.*

I. 'Tis true of Intemperance in general, whether it be Gluttony or Drunkenness, that it does the greatest Injury imaginable to the Body, tho' for the present it pleases and gratifies its Lusts. This all Men are sensible of, who propose to themselves any Honour or Advantage by bodily Performances. *Eve-* 1 Cor. 9. *ry man that striveth for the mastery,* (says ^{25.} St. Paul) that is, every one that is bred up for the Race, or other such Exercises, *is temperate in all things.* Excels of Diet makes the Body sluggish and unactive, not fit for any sort of Businels; and what is worse, it is so far from nourishing the Body, that it raises in it an unnatural Heat, which is the Cause of many sharp and incurable Distempers. The Marks of its Unwholesomeness appear in the very Looks of the Intemperate; and other sad Inconveniencies which do

Prov. 23. frequently attend it, are described by
29, 30. *Solomon. Who hath Woe? Who hath Sor-
 row? Who hath Contentions? Who hath
 Babblings? Who hath Wounds without
 Cause? Who hath Redness of Eyes? They
 that tarry long at the Wine, they that go
 to seek mixt Wine.*

Verse 33. The Dangers and Mischiefs of it are
*yet farther describ'd by him. Thine Eyes
 shall behold strange Women, and thine
 Heart shall utter perverse things; thou
 shalt be as he that lieth down in the
 midst of the Sea, or as he that lieth upon
 the top of a Mast; they have stricken me
 shalt thou say, and I was not sick, they
 have beaten me and I felt it not; when
 shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.*

'Tis the great Unhappinels of this
 Sin, that when the Body is once accu-
 stomed to it, there is scarce any Possibili-
 ty of leaving it; it then requires ex-
 cessive Drinking as its natural Nourish-
 ment, it droops and languishes without
 it. The Appetite, the more it has been
 this Way indulg'd, grows the more cra-
 ving and insatiable; so that though the
 Drunkard may be made sensible of the
 great Dangers, and many Mischiefs his
 Sin has exposed him to, yet 'tis very
 seldom that he grows so much Master of
 himself,

himself, that either his own Reflections, or the Reasons and Persuasions of others should prevail with him to forsake it.

2dly, This Sin of *Drunkenness* is no less prejudicial to the Mind, by weakening and disturbing the Powers of it, than it is to the Body, by the Pains and Distempers and ill Habits it brings upon it. Every Fit of it is a short Frenzie, which leaves the Mind in a stupid and sottish Posture, and sometimes downright Madness has ensued upon it. Men may flatter themselves that this will not be the effect of their Drinking, but if we believe *Seneca*, they may as well imagine, that if they drink Poison it shall not hurt them,

And as there is so ill an Influence upon the Understanding from this Sin, so it does likewise as much corrupt and deprave the Will. The Prophet *Hosea* tells us, *Wine and new Wine take away the Heart*; ^{Hos. 4. 11.} they change its Disposition and Inclinations, make it averse to Religion and Virtue, and fill it with the worst of Passions, such as Lust, Hatred, Revenge and Cruelty. As the Powers of Reason decay and are weaken'd, the Heart must needs be set open to receive any ill Impressions,

Impressions, as well as it is seen by Experience at such Times, to discover any secret Lust or Wickedness it is addicted to.

Whatever Weakness a Man has, whatever is the natural Temper or Bent of his Soul, it will most commonly betray it self in Drinking, because every predominant Passion in a Man is thereby heightened and inflamed to that degree, that as it over-powers Reason, so it leaves no room for Reserve or Caution; 'tis therefore no wonder at all that the Drunkards own Tongue does so often discover the Naughtiness of his Spirit.

There is one very ill Property and Effect of this Sin, that as it makes a Man *unfit to advise* and govern himself, so it renders him incapable of receiving Advice, or being governed by others.

Prov. 20. *Wine, says Solomon, is a Mocker, strong Drink is raging*; that is, it makes Men mock and scoff at all good Counsel, or else it enrages them against those Friends who are so faithful as to give it them. *Wherefore, says he, whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*

If Drunkenness be so great a Crime in a private Man, 'tis much more intolerable in Magistrates and Rulers. *So-*

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lomon tells us, *It is not for Kings to drink* Prov. 31. *Wine, nor for Princes Strong Drink, least* ^{4, 5.} *they drink and forget the Law, and pervert the Judgment of any of the afflicted.* There is great Danger of a Prince if he be given to excess of Drinking, that it will dispose him to be Arbitrary, and to set himself up above right Reason, and the Laws of his Country, for the Drunkard loves Flattery, is a great Admirer of himself, is Proud and Insolent, and strongly inclin'd to Cruelty; besides, he is not able to keep a Secret, and consequently is an unfit Person to manage publick Interests, or to be entrusted with State Councils and Policies. In short, they must needs be ill-qualify'd to govern others, who have lost all Government of themselves.

3dly. Drinking to Excess is prejudicial, not only to the Soul and Body, but likewise to a Man's Temporal Estate. Indeed, sometimes it happens that Men carry on their Designs and private Interests by it; they encrease their Trade by good Fellowship, force their Way into great Dealings by it, and being of a stronger Brain than their Companions, they may perhaps take the Advantage of it, and over-reach them in Bargaining;

or

or sometimes an Ambitious Man, having no hopes of raising himself by true Merit, endeavours it by base and wicked Compliances, and recommends himself to the Favour of the great Persons he courts, by bearing them Company in their Excesses and Debaucheries; for as St. Peter tells us, there are many, and some of them in high Places, who

1 Pet. 4. 4. think it strange, and will do you no Service, but will rather speak Evil of you, if you run not with them to the same Excess of Riot.

But supposing there are some few Instances of this sort of Men that have gain'd by Drinking, yet such Men lose their Reputation by it, which is the best Part of Temporal Happiness, and as the

Prov. 22. 1. Wise Man tells us, It is rather to be chosen than Riches. But however, for the

most Part, the Observation which Solomon made concerning Luxury and Intemper-

Prov. 21. 27. rance will be found true, he that loveth Wine and Oil, or delicious Fare, shall not be rich.

Prov. 23. 29. And again, The Drunkard and the Glutton shall come to Poverty and Drowsiness; the Effect of those Vices, shall cloth a Man with Rags.

Besides the Loss of Time and neglect of Business which are occasioned by hard

hard Drinking, the very Expence of it, especially to those who are to earn their own Livelihood, must needs waste and exhaust their Substance, and reduce them to Beggary.

It is therefore commonly said in Defence of such unthrifty Sinners, that they are good-natur'd harmless Men, and no Bodies Enemies but their own: but neither can this Excuse be allowed them, 'tis certain they are very much their own Enemies, and it will appear also that they are as mischievous and injurious to other Men. *Wine*, says the Son of *Sirach*, ^{Ecclius. 31} when it is drunk to *Excess* maketh *Bitterness of Mind*, and causeth *Brawling and Strife*, Railing and Reviling, and all Manner of ill Language, and sometimes Blows and Wounds proceed from it. That is not to be accounted a harmless Vice, which has been the Cause of so many Adulteries and Murders. At the best, a Drunkard is injurious to others, in spending that unnecessarily upon himself, which was intended by Providence for the Support of many; he wrongs his own Family by his Profuseness, and by his neglect to make suitable Provision for it; or if he be single, and without such Dependants, yet

yet, however, he wrongs the Poor, iff disabling himself from doing his Duty of Charity towards them.

Can they be said to be harmless Sinners, who give Scandal and Offence to all good Men, who are a Disgrace to any Church or Religion they profess themselves of, and who are unprofitable Members of the State they live under, being not fit to govern, nor willing to obey?

A Drunkard is so great a Scandal to any Christian Society, that St. Paul ex-communicates him with the most notorious Offenders, forbidding Christians so much *as to eat with him.* *I have written unto you not to keep Company with such:* Which he would never have done, if their Company were so Innocent and Harmless as is pretended. The Company they are rank'd with by the Apostle, are *Whoremongers, Idolaters, covetous Persons, Extortioners,* such as are the greatest Enemies to God, or most grievous Oppressors of their Brethren, who for the heinousness of their Crimes *shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Let us therefore my Brethren be watchful over our selves to avoid all Occasions or Temptations to this Sin. Let us keep

keep our selves constantly to a sober and moderate Diet, and set some Time apart for Fasting and Abstinence, that so we may the better lift up our Hearts to God, and be the fitter to perform any Exercise of our Holy Religion ; such as Prayer to God, or Hearing, Reading and Meditating in his Holy Word, that we may perform them as we ought, and receive Spiritual Comfort and Advantage from them.

If we have any Regard to the Health and Safety of our Bodies, if we would keep our Minds Quiet and in due Temper, not ruffled and disorder'd by violent Passions, nor yet endanger'd by Frenzy and Madness ; if we would preserve the Substance which Providence has given us, and live inoffensively towards all Men, and profitably in the State of which we are Members, if we would shew our selves to be truly Christians, and give no Occasion of Scandal to our Brethren ; let us carefully observe the Apostle's Rule, whether we Eat or Drink, let us do it with Thanksgiving to the Praise and Glory of God ; to whom, &c.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VIII.

*Of the Reverence due to
Churches.*

LEVIT. xix. 30.

Reverence my Sanctuary.

BY Sanctuary is meant a Place that is set a part and dedicated to the Publick Worship and Service of Almighty God, such as the Tabernacle, the Temple and Synagogues were amongst the Jews, and such as Churches, Chapels, and Oratories are amongst us Christians. There are Two Reasons which make it very necessary to exhort Men to pay that Respect and Reverence which is due to such Sacred Places. One is the most Scandalous Neglect of Christians to repair thither at the Times appointed for God's Publick Worship: Another Reason is, That they who do come at those Times,

Times, behave themselves for the most part so irreverently and indecently, as though they knew no Distinction between the Church of God and their own Houses.

This is such horrid Profaneness, as may well expect God's severest Judgments to punish and avenge it ; to prevent which, and to instruct Men what their Duty is in this Particular, is the Design of the following Discourse : In which I shall shew,

I. *That there is a relative Holiness belonging to Churches.*

II. *That it is the Duty of God's People to resort to them.*

III. *That Men ought to behave themselves in the Church, with an Holy Awe and Reverence.*

I. I shall shew that there is a relative Holiness belonging to such Places ; that is, by being set apart to God's Service, a Right and Property accrues to him in them, over and above that common Right which he has in all his other Creatures ; and likewise God is present, he makes his Abode and Residence in them in another manner, than in any other Places ; for tho' *Heaven is his throne, and earth his foot-stool*, and no House or

L. Building,

Building, how magnificent soever, is either able or worthy to receive and contain his incomprehensible Majesty: *Tho' God dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*, so as to be confin'd and inclosed within their Walls like the Heathen Idols, and Man is himself a Temple of a nobler Structure, than any he can erect to the Honour of his Maker, yet even natural Religion has taught Men from the first Ages of the World, to worship Almighty God in Places set apart for his Service, and God has approved of the Piety and Devotion of those Men, who built and dedicated them for such Holy Purposes: He has always claim'd a particular Right and Interest in them, and the Contempt that is shewn of them, or the Profane Uses they are put to, is look'd upon by him as an Injury done to himself, and an Affront offer'd to his Divine Majesty.

'Tis true, our Saviour teaches us that
Joh. 4. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him,
must worship him in Spirit and in Truth;
for the Father seeketh such to worship him.
But this was not spoke in Derogation of God's House, where that Spiritual Worship may more fitly and decently be perform'd, than in Places of common Use

Use and Converse. For we read of Christ that he did frequently resort to the Temple, *And he taught daily in the temple.* Luk. 19. *ple, as himself tells us. When he was yet*^{47.} *but twelve years old, and his parents had* Luk. 2. 46. *lost him for three days, there it was they found him, sitting in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. He came thither early* Joh. 8. 2. *in the morning, and all the people came unto him, and he sate down and taught them. As David said of Mount Sinai,* where the Temple stood; *That it was* Psal. 68. *God's Hill, the place where he desired to*^{16.} *dwell. So Christ does expressly call the Temple* his father's house. *Here he af-* Joh. 2. 16. *firms it to be his habitation. Who so shall* Matt. 23. *swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and*^{21.} *by him that dwelleth therein. Than which,* nothing can more expressly declare, *That tho' God be Present every where, yet the Temple or Church, is the Place of his more peculiar Abode and Residence.* Were there no Difference between Houses of Sacred and of Common Use, Why should Christ work a Miracle to drive the Buyers and the Sellers out of the Temple? For so St. Hierom accounts that Action of our Saviour's, to be one of the greatest of his Miracles: The

Jews were content to suffer a Market to be kept, and Trade to be carried on, not in the more Sacred Parts, but within the Precincts of the Temple; as 'tis supposed by Learned Men it was in the Court of the Gentiles: But this being the Place where the Nations offer'd up their Prayers to God, that very Use of it made it Sacred, if God had not by *Isai. 56. 7.* his Prophet declared it to be so. And it gave such Offence to our Saviour to see it turn'd to Profane Uses, that he never shew'd so much Indignation and Resentment, as on this Occasion; he who was the perfect Pattern of Meekness, who bore all the Injuries and Indignities against himself with absolute Patience and Submission, and was never known to do the least Hurt, or offer any Violence to his worst Enemies, was so provok'd at this Dishonour that was done to his Father, that he drove out the Profane Wretches with a Scourge; he did it with that Warmth of Passion, that it put his Disciples in mind of this *Psal. 69. 9.* Passage in the *Psalms, The Zeal of thine House, hath even eaten me up.*

Neither was it the Temple alone for which Christ express'd so great a Veneration, and which he so much frequent-
ed,

ed, but he shew'd the same Regard to all other Places of God's Worship, wherever he met with them. We read ^{he Mat. 4.23.} *went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.* He did not draw his Hearers into Corners, nor set up Private Meeting-Houses for them. *I ever John 18. taught (says he) in the Synagogue and in* ^{20.} *the Temple, and in secret have I said nothing.* He knew the Blessing of God was most likely to go along with his Doctrin, when it was delivered in Places appointed for such Uses, where God vouchsafed his more immediate Presence, and where the Holy Angels pay their Attendance upon him, and stand ready to minister to those who shall be Heirs of Salvation. 'Tis well known what Zeal and Veneration the Jews always had for the Place of God's Publick Worship. This was never charged upon them as superstitious by their Prophets; and our Saviour Christ was so far from blaming them for it, that he carried this sort of Esteem and Reverence, much higher than they themselves practised it; he would not suffer that any Man should so much as *carry a vessel through the temple;* ^{Mark 11.} and for the Reward and Encouragement ^{16.}

of those who frequented the Holy Place, there it was that he instructed them in his Heavenly Doctrin, and wrought many miraculous Cures.

But Christ was *made under the Law*, he lived in Subjection and Obedience to it, therefore some may think the Veneration he paid to the Temple, is no more to be imitated by us, than his Compliance with several other Rules and Customs of the Jewish Religion. But this Surmize is of no Force, if it be consider'd that Christ did not justifie that Action of his in driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple upon any Law or Custom of the Jews, but upon that

Isai. 56.7. Prophecy of *Isaiah*, *My house shall be called the house of Prayer for all Nations*. The Inference he makes from thence, is a rational Argument of the same Strength now as it was then; if it were a place appointed for any Act of God's Worship, as Prayer is, then Secular Busines ought not to be transacted in it.

And since in all Probability it was the Court of the Gentiles which was so profanely turn'd into a Market-place, for the Jews would never have suffer'd it in any other Part of the Temple; hence it is yet more plain that the Jews themselves

selves being of Opinion that there was no Sanctity in that Place, it was not in Compliance with their Rites or Traditions, but upon the eternal Principles of Reason and Religion, that our Saviour vindicated the Honour thereof, with so much Zeal and Courage.

'Tis a strange Notion which very much prevails in our Times, that all Distinction of Places is superstitious or of Jewish Extraction; that God being present every where and of Infinite Majesty, his Worship is perform'd as acceptably to him, and as profitably to our selves in Barns and Stables, as in Buildings dedicated and set apart to God's Service.

This Opinion would effectually overthrow all Order and Decency in God's Publick Worship; it condemns the Zeal and Piety of our Fore-Fathers in all Ages, who spared no Expence, and thought they could not better dispose of their Charity, than in erecting Magnificent Structures to the Honour of God, and for the Ease and Benefit of Posterity. It also contradicts the Scripture which frequently puts a Difference between Places of Sacred and Common Use, and contains express Promises made by God himself, of a more peculiar and imme-

diate Presence in Places consecrated to his Service. *David* was as well acquainted with the Attributes of God, his Immensity and Omnipresence, as the Wisest of us all can be; he knew that it was impossible to confine him to any Dwelling, who fills Heavens and Earth with the Majesty of his Glory; yet how did he long to build God an House! *He had set his Affection to it*, as himself tells us: How uneasie was he that *the Ark of God should dwell within curtains*, whilst he, his unworthy Servant, *dwelt in an house of Cedar*! He had therefore made Preparations for a Temple, but God forbid him to go on with it. Not that he was displeased with his Intention, or thought it unbecoming his Majesty to have a House built to the Honour of his Name: But *David* was an unfit Person for such a Work, as we find by God's Answer to him.

1 Chron. 28. 3. *Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.* *But Solomon thy Son, he shall build my house and my courts.* *Nevertheless forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart.*

And accordingly we find that *Solomon* did immediately set himself to the Work

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with so much Zeal, that no Bulding in the World could ever equal it in Glory and Magnificence ; and yet when he came to dedicate it, he owns *that heaven* 2 Chron. *and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain* 6. 18. *the majesty of God, how much less the house which he had built ?* He was not so vain as to imagine that the vast Treasures he had laid out upon it, could make it a fit Habitation for the Maker of all Things ; but yet he did not think they were spent to no Purpose, since he thereby express'd his own Gratitude and Devotion towards him.

And it yet appears farther that the Respect our Saviour paid to the Houses of God, was no Part of Jewish Worship, since after their Law was abolish'd, the Apostles and Disciples of Christ did still resort to the Temple and the Synagogues, and there, after his Example, they constantly perform'd their Devotions to God. We read of them after our Saviour's Ascension, *That they continued daily with one accord in the temple.* Act.2. 46. And Paul and his Company, when they were come to Antioch, *went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day.* Act.13.14. That was the Place St. Paul chose to Preach in ; there he made that most excellent Sermon which brought the

Verse 44. *the whole city together, to hear it repeated the next Sabbath-day.*

St. Paal had a different Notion of the Church of God, from those Men who in our Times make so light of it; therefore he argues for the Reverence due to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, from the Sacredness of the Place in which it is administer'd: Amongst other Expostulations which he uses with the *Corinthians*, who behaved themselves so profanely at the Holy Table, that they even

^{1 Cor. 11.} drank to Excess at it: *What (says he)*

^{22.} *do ye despise the Church of God?* He knew that tho' Omnipresence be an Attribute of God, yet it is not so of his Angels, who minister to our Salvation; they have their Stations appointed them, and where should that be but in the House of God: And therefore he advises the *Corinthian* Women to forbear an indecent Custom which they used in

^{1 Cor. 11.} *their Church, because of the Angels.*

^{10.} Thus it appears from the Practice of Christ and his Apostles, as well as from that of all Holy Men in all Ages before them, that a Distinction ought to be made of Places dedicated to God's Worship, from those of ordinary Use; and the Distinction lies in this, that the former

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mer are to be look'd upon as Holy, in Respect of God's more peculiar and immediate Presence, and of the Sacred Offices perform'd in them.

2. I shall shew that it is the Duty of God's Servants, diligently and constantly to resort to them: This is in Part shewn already. If we think there lies any Obligation upon us to follow the Example of our Saviour and his Apostles, and of all Good Men before them. But the very End and Design of such Places, the Uses they are appointed to, may admonish us of our Duty to frequent them; for here it is that God's Word is Preach'd, his Sacraments Administer'd, and our Prayers and Praises are Offer'd up to him. St. Paul tells you *your houses are to eat and to drink in*, do not therefore so despise the Church of God, and confound the Order of Things, as to imagine that the Worship of God, and the Sacred Offices of Christianity, may be as well perform'd at Home as in Holy Places; this is altogether as improper and indecent (unless in Cases of urgent Necessity) as it would be to make the House of God a Place for Domestick Business, or Hospitable Entertainments.

A Slothful or Schismatical Spirit is apt to suggest such Opinions, that God being nigh at Hand, as well as a-far off, 'tis at our own Liberty to pay him the Worship and Adoration that is due to him in what Place we please; and this is thought a very plausible Excuse for those who live at a great Distance from the Places of publick Worship. But though God's Omnipresence be the Pretence of their absenting themselves, yet in truth the one does it out of Laziness and Irreligion; the other, that he may the better carry on or conceal his Wicked Designs.

But if it were so indifferent a Matter in what Place God's publick Worship is perform'd, why should God himself require it of the *Jews*, that how far soever they lived from *Jerusalem*, yet all their Males should repair thither Three

Deut. 16. Times every Year, *to appear before him in the Place which he should chuse*? That is, in his Holy Temple. What Expence and Trouble would it have saved them, if their Service might but have been accepted in their Synagogues? But though these were Places appointed for some sort of Sacred Uses, yet they would not serve the Turn in all Cases;

Jerusalem

Jerusalem was the Place where all the Jews were bound to Worship.

Accordingly, we find that *Joseph* and the Virgin *Mary* went to *Jerusalem* every Year at the Feast of the Passover, and at Twelve Years of Age our Saviour himself went along with them. Luke 2.41;

'Tis true, God has promised in the Gospel, that *the Prayers we make to him* Mat. 6. 6. *in the Closet in Secret, he will reward openly.* But private Devotion, though it be necessary and acceptable with God, ought not to exclude or interfere with the Frequency of his Publick Worship. We are bound to be secret in our good Works for fear of Hypocrisie and Vain-glory ; but yet sometimes the Glory of God, and the Benefit of our Brethren require, that our Service and Obedience appear in Publick. Our Saviour does therefore exhort and command us *to let our Lights shine before Men*, to appear Good, as well as to be so ; and as it is a certain Sign of Hypocrisie to affect to be seen in those Duties which should be private, so on the other Hand 'tis downright *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, not to give on proper Occasions some publick Testimonies of our Faith and Obedience.

If

If the Duties of the Closet would excuse those of the Church, what need had *Peter* and *John* to go up together *into the Temple at the Hour of Prayer*? Without doubt they went not thither for Business or Curiosity, but to join in the Service and Devotions of the publick Assembly.

Anna the Prophetess is spoken of in the Gospel as a very Pious Widow; and this is her Character, *She departed not from the Temple; but served God with Fastings and Prayers Night and Day*; and Rev. 7.15. in the *Revelations*, 'tis said, that *they who are before the Throne, serve God Night and Day in his Temple*. If the Joys and Happiness of Heaven are represented by this kind of Service, they are very unfit for that Place, who have no Relish of it here on Earth, but are either weary of the Publick Worship, or disdain to come near it.

However, 'tis fit every one should understand how God resents the Contempt of Holy Places, and what Judgments he has inflicted for it in this Life. When the People of *Israel* took great Care of their own Houses, and none of God's, they were visited with great Drought, and the consequent of that a Famine,

Famine. The Prophet *Haggai* is sent to acquaint them with the Occasion of their Calamity. *He looked for much, and lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it: Why saith the Lord of hosts? because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the Heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.* If Men will not resort to the House of Prayer, to offer up their Supplications for God's Spiritual and Temporal Blessings, 'tis but a just Judgment if God sends a Scarcity of them; the Want of the one is a grievous Affliction in this Life, but the Want of the other is felt to Eternity.

In the Primitive Church it was reckon'd a dreadful Punishment to be debar'd the Privilege of entring into the House of God. Excommunication is call'd by St. Paul, *a delivering unto Satan*; ^{1Cor. 5. 5.} and in the Old Testament God threatens it as the greatest Judgment upon the Wickedness of the Jews: *I will drive them (says he) out of mine house, and I will love them no more.* What then are we to think of those who are constantly absent from the Church, without any Hindrance of Sickness, or any other Lawful

Lawful Excuse? They save the Church the Trouble of delivering them over unto Satan, for they effectually do it themselves, by losing the Benefit of Christian Communion. For what Hopes can there be of Salvation for those who neglect all the Means of Grace, hearing God's Holy Word, offering up their Prayers and Praises to him, and receiving the Seals and Pledges of his Love in the Blessed Sacrament?

Having thus made it appear to be the Duty of all Christians to frequent the Place of God's Publick Worship, I proceed to the Third Thing proposed. To shew how they ought to demean and behave themselves when they are there.

Reason and common Experience teach Men to take care of their Behaviour, that it be suitable to the Company they are in, and the Presence they are before: How fearful are Men to offend against the Rules of Decency and good Breeding, in the Presence of an Earthly Monarch! The Awe and Dread of Majesty, appears in the Looks and Carriage of all that are about him. So ought it to be in the House of God. *The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him.* 'Tis certain that God sees

Habak. 2:
20.

sees us where-ever we are, which should make us have a constant Guard upon our selves, least in any kind we offend him; but in the Church, *where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there is he in the midst of them.* He is as it were one with us, transacting together the great Affairs of our Salvation and his Glory. We ought therefore to be very circumspect in our Carriage, in respect of the Business we are about, as well as of the Majesty of God, which in a peculiar Manner is there present with us.

Keep thy Foot, says Solomon, when thou goest into the House of God. Which is^{1.} an Expression intimating to us, that we ought to be careful of our whole Behaviour and Deportment, that it be full of the Awe and Reverence of the Divine Majesty. We must be grave and serious, not allowing our selves either in wandering Thoughts or wandering Looks. We must be silent and intent upon the Business we are about, and endeavour, as much as 'tis possible, to demean our selves agreeably to the several Offices that are in performing, and express in our outward Behaviour, the inward Sense and Affection of our Souls: that is, when

M Confession

Confession of Sins is made, How well do Penitent Looks and humble Postures become us? When we hear the Absolution pronounc'd, we should receive the glad Tidings with Joy and Thankfulness; in our Prayers we should express Humility, and in our Praises Clearfulness: When the Word of God is in Preaching we should fix our Attention as if God himself were speaking to us, and at the Name of *Jesus*, who is the Fountain and Foundation of all Blessings to us, and the great Lord and King of Heaven and Earth, if there be no positive Command, yet at least it is very decent for us to bow the Head and make *Obeyfance*.

We should do well to propose to our selves, when we are in the House of God, the Example of the penitent Publican's Behaviour in the Temple, *he stood afar off to shew his Humility; he smote upon his Breast, to signifie his hearty Contrition*; he used but very few Words, *Lord have Mercy upon me a Sinner*, as if he look'd upon himself as unworthy to interrupt the Majesty of Heaven with his Prayers.

But for Men to be loose and giddy at the time of their Devotion, laughing or talking, or using indecent idle Gestures,

stures, shewing great Uneasiness at what is a-doing, or a Disdain and Contempt of it, is such a betraying of an irreligious foolish Spirit, that it were much better for them to keep at Home, or beany where else, than so expose themselves, and give such Offence, and set so ill an Example to the Congregation.

Jacob, when he was convinc'd by a Vision of Angels which he saw in a Dream, ascending and descending, that the Place where he lay was Holy Ground, and that the Lord was in it, he was afraid and said, *How dreadful is this Place? This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.* A true and lively Faith would give Men the same Awe and Dread of the Divine Majesty in Places of his more immediate Presence, as their Sences could do, if they saw him there, attended with his Glorious Retinue of Angels. Thus *David* speaks of himself, *I will come into thy* Psal. 5. 7. *House in the Multitude of thy Mercy, and in thy Fear will I worship toward thy Holy Temple.*

To raise such an holy Awe and Reverence in our Souls, we should do well to consider, that when we are going to the House of God, we are going to

M 2 appear

appear in the Presence of the great God of Heaven and Earth, who though he be a God of Infinite Mercy to those who fear him, yet to his Enemies, and those who despise him, as the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, he is *a Consuming Fire*.

Lastly, The Business we go about is not some trifling Temporal Affair, but the great Concern of our Souls, our Eternal Salvation, which is either endangered by our unfit and unworthy Behaviour in that Place; or otherwise is as much farthered, and promoted by the Benefits we may receive there: For if we serve God as we ought to do, *with Reverence and a holy Fear*, in the Places appointed for his Worship, we shall hereafter be admitted to Rest with him *on his holy Hill, to serve him Night and Day in his heavenly Temple, where we shall see him Face to Face, and as he is.*

DIS.

DISCOURSE IX.
OF THE
Worthy Receiving
THE
SACRAMENT
OF THE
Lord's-Supper.

LUKE xxii. 19.

Do this in Remembrance of me.

THE wonderful Love of the Son
of God towards Mankind very
plainly appears, not only in the
Redemption and Salvation which he
purchased for us by his Death and Pas-
sion,
M 3

sion, but likewise in the Provision he has made for the continual Remembrance of that inestimable Mercy, to make it effectual in us, to the Ends and Purposes for which he design'd it.

For as tender Parents are careful to preserve and secure for their Childrens Use, the Estates or Treasures which with much Pains and Industry they have gotten for them, so our Blessed Saviour thought it not enough to have reconciled us to his Father, (whose Favour is the Fountain of Eternal Life) but he has also wisely made Choice of, and appointed the best Means for conveying to us, the Benefit and Advantage of it.

And of those Means, none are of greater Virtue and Efficacy, than the frequent celebrating the Memory of his most precious Death, in the manner he has enjoin'd us at his Holy Table.

Which, however it may seem to some Men, to be a Matter of no great Use or Importance, yet the Faithful find by Experience, that a due Performance of it, refreshes the Soul with Spiritual Comforts, repairs the Decays, and strengthens the Weakness of depraved Nature, and raises in them the most grateful Remembrance of the Benefits of Christ's Death,

which

which fills their Minds with Peace and Joy, and makes them resolve to express their Thankfulness to their Redeemer, not only with their Lips, but in a Holy, and ~~un~~blameable Conversation.

The Feast of Passover was instituted by Almighty God, for a Memorial of the wonderful Deliverance of his People *Israel*, out of *Egypt*; and so the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, was ordain'd and Establish'd by our Saviour Christ, in Remembrance of his Death and Sufferings, to which is owing the Mercy of our Redemption. There is therefore a general Obligation upon all Christians to resort to this Feast, as they hope to have any Share of the Benefits of our Saviour's Passion.

And they must come to it, not after the manner of the People in the Church of *Rome*, to be Spectators of what is transacted by the Priest alone, but to partake of it themselves; for 'tis as much in vain to expect, that Seeing another Person communicating for us, will avail any thing to the Good of our Souls, as it would be to imagine, that the looking upon others while they are at Meat, should stay our Hunger, or conduce to the Nourishment of our Bodies.

M 4

But

But such a Practice as this, let it be imposed by what Authority soever, is directly contrary to the express Words and Command of our Saviour; particularly with relation to the Cup: *Drink ye all of this.* So also for the Bread, his Words were, *Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you; do this,* that is, take and eat it *in remembrance of me.*

It being therefore a Duty absolutely required of every Christian, to be himself a Partaker of the Lord's Supper, and not to think it sufficient that he beholds any other Person partaking of it for him; it follows, that every one ought to endeavour sincerely to prepare himself for it, according to the Dignity of so great a Mystery; least otherwise, as Physick unadvisedly or irregularly taken, proves hurtful to the Body, so this Spiritual Remedy appointed by Christ for the good of the Soul, should only tend to its Ruin and eternal Destruction. For

1 Cor. 11. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily,
says St. Paul, *eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* But as he advises, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* To the same Purpose is that sharp Rebuke in the Parable of the Marriage-Feast;

Friend,

Upon the SACRAMENT. 169

*Friend, How camest thou in bither, not Mat. 22.
having on a wedding garment? And that* ^{12.} *we may prepare our selves as we ought
to do, there are these Three Things
plainly required of us.*

*I. A right Understanding and just Esteem
of this Holy Mystery.*

*II. A lively and stedfast Faith in Christ
our Saviour.*

*III. Firm Resolutions of Purity and
Newness of Life.*

I. It is indispensably necessary for those who come to the Lord's Supper, to have a right Understanding and a just Esteem of it. They must above all things, take heed that they be not ignorant of the Nature of this Sacrament, which consisting in the positive Institution of Christ, must be administer'd and received in such a manner as agrees with his Example and Command: For if we should celebrate this Mystery otherwise than as it was delivered by Christ the Author of it, in St. Ambrose's Judgment, we are unworthy of him. What Devotion can we pretend to shew to the Memory of our Saviour, if we presume to make any Alteration in the most solemn Part of our religious Service, which is fix'd and establish'd

establish'd by the Authority of his own express Command?

It was design'd as a Memorial of that Sacrifice which Christ once offered upon the Cross; let us reverence it as such, and not as the real and proper Sacrifice. 'Tis call'd a Communion, which implies that many partake of it together, 'tis therefore absurd for any Man whatever to receive it alone. It was instituted and administred by our Saviour under both the Elements of Bread and Wine; let us not suffer our selves to be Sacrilegiously deprived of either of them; it was intended for the Use and Benefit of the Living, wherefore to offer it up for the Dead, as it does them no Good, so neither will it profit those that are guilty of such vain Superstition.

These, with many others, are Innovations which the Church of *Rome* has brought upon this Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But *S. Cyprian* gives us good Advice in such Cases, That we adhere to the first beginning, the original Institution, the Tradition of Christ himself; and do that in Remembrance of him, which he himself did and commanded, and which is confirmed to us by the Practice of his holy Apostles.

This

This will give us true Notions and a right Understanding of so great a Mystery, which we ought so much the more diligently to endeavour after, since they who are without it, can neither set a just Value, nor make a true use of the wonderful Graces and Benefits which are therein offered and exhibited to us. An ignorant Person will be apt to entertain too mean Thoughts of them, and so incur the Displeasure of that God whose Gifts they are, or so utterly despise them as to harden his Heart, and bring upon himself Everlasting Destruction.

'Tis good therefore in this Case to follow the Advice of *Solomon*, *When* Prov.23.1. *thou sittest to eat with a Ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.* When we are at the Table of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, such Caution is infinitely more necessary, than if we were to sit down to eat with an Earthly Prince. We must be careful to shew no Disdain or Contempt of the Provision that is made for us, chiefly regarding the End for which we are invited to it, which is to nourish our Souls with the Food of Immortality, and not to feed our Bodies, or gratifie our Senses. We must look

Look with an Eye of Faith beyond the Elements of Bread and Wine, and consider the heavenly Graces which are thereby convey'd to us.

This Table, says S. *Chrysostom*, is for Eagles, who fly where the dead Body lies, alluding to the Body of Christ, which by Faith is verily taken and receiv'd in the Sacrament of his last Supper.

The *Jews*, in keeping their Passover, were commanded by Almighty God, to consider the Cause and End of its Institution: This they were obliged to teach their Children, as well as the Rites and Ceremonies that were annexed to it, 'tis surely as much our Duty to be as thoroughly instructed in the Nature of our Sacrament, as they were of theirs; and though the ignorant receive the outward Elements, yet for want of competent Knowledge to ground their Faith upon, they lose the true Fruits and Benefits which might have accrued from them. What was it else but Ignorance of the high Dignity of this Mystery, which made the *Corinthians* use it so familiarly and profanely. S.

^{1 Cor. 11.} Paul tells us, that they did not discern the Lord's Body. They did not understand how

how it differ'd from their common and ordinary Food ; therefore some of them were guilty of drinking to Excess even at the Lord's Table. But let the fearful Judgments, the Sickness and Mortal Distempers which raged amongst them, for their indecent irreligious Behaviour at this heavenly Banquet, be a Warning to us, that we approach it *with Reverence and Godly Fear*, and express the awful Sence and Esteem we have of it, in the humblest Gestures, and devoutest Actions of Praise and Thanksgiving.

But we must be careful that our Zeal be govern'd by our Understandings, least otherwise we run into the contrary Extream, and instead of the Profaneness of the *Corinthians*, we fall into the Idolatrous Practices of the Church of *Rome*, and pay that Worship and Adoration to the Elements, the Creatures of Bread and Wine, which is due only to the Creator, Christ our Saviour, whose Body it set forth and represented by them.

Ignorance of the true Nature of this Sacrament is the Cause of this and of the former Error ; it has also introduc'd many other gross Abuses into the Church, as that of private Masses, and offering for

for the Dead as well as for the Living ; it has also been in a great Measure the occasion of the decay of Brotherly Love and Charity amongst Christians, the preserving and promoting of which is one of the chief Ends of the Lord's Supper ; and what else but Ignorance of the great Usefulness and Advantages of Communicating, is the Cause why of late it is so generally neglected amongst us, that though the Primitive Christians received this Sacrament Daily and Weekly, and our Church requires all her Members to partake of it at least Three Times in the Year, there are yet so many who never come to the Communion at all, and but few that can be prevailed with to receive it more than once Yearly.

But whilst we thus press upon Men the Necessity of attaining to a right Understanding of this Sacrament, we do not mean, neither can it be supposed, that every one should arrive to a perfect Knowledge of it, so as to be able to comprehend its whole Doctrine, to decide all the Points in Controversie, or resolve the difficult and Intricate Cases that have arisen concerning it.

But

But thus much every Christian ought to know of it, that it is no vain empty Ceremony, nor yet meerly a Sign or Figure to represent something absent: For on the contrary, the Scriptures call it *the Table of the Lord, his Bread and his Cup, the Memorial of Christ, whereby we shew forth his Death till he come.* They 1 Cor. 11: tell us moreover, that *it is the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord,* uniting us to him after a wonderful manner by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, through Faith that is wrought in us; whereby we are assured of the Gift of Eternal Life, and that for the Body as well as for the Soul, which, after an happy and glorious Resurrection, shall be re-united to live together for all Eternity.

The Primitive Fathers of the Church, who delighted to contemplate this great Mystery of our Union with Christ our Head, and saw clearest into it, were wont to speak of the Lord's Supper as the blessed Instrument of it, with such Strains of Eloquence as might charm and invite Men to a frequent receiving of it.

They call it a divine, god-like Communion, the sweet Repast of our Saviour Christ, the great Preservative against

gainst Death, the Pledge of Everlasting Salvation, the Guard of our Faith, the Hope of an happy Resurrection. 'Tis with them the Food of Immortality, the Grace which bringeth Salvation, and which preserves us for Eternity.

Which Expressions both of the Scriptures and of the Fathers of the Church, if we would frequently reflect upon, how would our Souls, our Desires and Affections be inflamed towards this Sacrament? With what Impatience should we hunger and thirst after it? Not so much considering the outward Elements of Bread and Wine, as the thing signifi'd thereby, which is the Body and Blood of Christ, verily and indeed taken and received by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper.

It is at this Feast that the Faithful Christians perceive and know, that the Mercies of God are sealed and made sure to them, that the Blood of Christ is accepted in full Satisfaction for their Sins, the free Forgiveness of which is ratify'd and confirm'd at the Holy Table.

The Hearts of true Believers, whilst they are celebrating these Mysteries, do overflow with Peace of Conscience and Joy in the Holy Ghost, hereby their Faith

Faith is encreased, their Hope is raised and enliven'd, and their Charity is made more fervent and more diffusive, and every other Christian Grace or Virtue receives new Strength and Improvement from it. Which blessed Fruits and Effects of the holy Sacrament, Blindness and Ignorance make Men uncapable of; which shews the Necessity of the first Thing required to prepare Men for the receiving the Lord's Supper, which is rightly to understand the Nature of it.

2dly, Another thing required for the same End, is a stedfast and lively Faith. We must believe not only in general, that Christ Jesus died for Sinners, that his Death is a sufficient Ransom, Atonement, and Satisfaction for the Sins of all Mankind, to purchase full Remission of them, and a perfect Reconciliation with his heavenly Father; but this every Man must apply to himself in particular. Whoever thou art that approachest the holy Table, thou must believe in thy Heart that Christ is thy Sacrifice, that upon the Cross he shed his most precious Blood for thy Sins. Thou must own him and no one else for thy Saviour; thou must not acknowledge any other Redeemer, Mediator or Inter-

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cessor, but Christ only, that thou may'st say with S. Paul, *he loved me and gave himself for me.*

This is to apply Christ to our selves, to lay hold of the Promise made in the Institution of the Sacrament, to make his Body and Blood to be ours, as to the Merit and Efficacy of them, for so Christ himself told his Disciples when he delivered the Bread to them, *This is my Body which was given for you;* and when he gave them the Cup, *this is my Blood which is shed for you,* and it is so only when we believe it to be so.

This is purely our own Act, no outward Means whatsoever can contribute any thing to it. 'Tis indeed the Office of the Priest to consecrate the Elements of Bread and Wine, and to deliver them to us, but that they are to us the Body of Christ, that they bring with them the Virtue and Efficacy of a Sacrament, depends entirely upon that Faith with which we receive them, for as bodily Food, if received into a foul unhealthy Stomach is indigested, and will afford no Strength or Nourishment; so neither will the Spiritual Food of the Lord's Supper be of any Use or Advantage to the Soul, to cleanse it from Sin, or to replenish

replenish it with Heavenly Graces, unless it be taken with a true and a lively Faith.

Our Church therefore following the Practice and Directions of the best Antiquity, calls upon us in the Office of the Communion, to lift up our Hearts, to raise our Thoughts and Affections above every thing there present to our Senses, to lift them up unto the Lord, at whose Table we are, and of whose Body we are going to be spiritually Partakers.

It is the Advice of one of the Primitive Fathers to those who are going to this Heavenly Banquet, ‘Look with Faith upon the Body and Blood of thy God, let thy Mind touch it with devout Wonder and Reverence, reach forth thy Heart to it, and receive it with thy Inward Man.

Wherefore my Brethren, when we resort to the Holy Table, let us wholly root up all Infidelity and Distrust of God’s Promises, let us approach it as living Members of Christ’s Body, who have our mutual abiding, we in him, and he in us; which Union is confirm’d and perfected by a due Participation of those sacred Mysteries: Let us

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remember that Hypocrites and Unbelievers have no Part in Christ, though they do outwardly communicate with the Faithful ; therefore try and examine your selves, whether God has purified your Hearts by a sincere and lively Faith, to the acknowledging of his Gospel, and embracing the Mercies which are offer'd to us in his Son Christ Jesus. If it be so with you, then may you approach with Joy and Boldness, to the Heavenly Feast he has provided for you ; being assured that you shall receive, not only the outward Sacrament, but the thing signified and represented by it, the Body and Blood of Christ your Saviour, not in Figure or Shadow only, but as to the Virtue and Efficacy of it in Reality and Truth, to the eternal Salvation of your Souls ; which God grant, through the Merits of our Lord and Saviour : To whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, for ever.

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DISCOURSE X.

A

Second Discourse
UPON THE
SACRAMENT
OF THE
Lord's-Supper.

LUKE xxii. 19.

Do this in Remembrance of me.

HAVING in my former Discourse upon these Words, laid down Three Things, as necessarily required of those who come to the Lord's Supper, namely, a right Understanding

standing and Esteem of that, Holy Mystery, a stedfast and lively Faith, and firm Resolutions of Newness of Life ; and having dispatch'd the Two first of those Qualifications, shewing withal, the End for which this Sacrament was Instituted by Christ, which is for a Memorial of his Death and Passion, and the Necessity of every Man's partaking of it in his own Person, and not by any other, it remains to consider the Third thing proposed, as necessary to our Worthy Communicating, which is *Newness of Life, Purity and Holiness in our Behaviour, Innocence and Integrity in all our Conversation*: These are the genuine Offspring of a true and lively Faith ; which is known thereby, as a Tree is by its Fruits.

And that these are required of all who come to the Lord's Supper, may appear from the Analogy there is between this Sacrament and the Passover among the Jews : Now 'tis certain that under the Law, no one was admitted to eat of the Passover, till he was first dedicated to God by the Ceremony of Circumcision ; which initiatory Rite, as St. Paul teaches us, laid an Obligation upon them *to fulfil all legal Righteousness* : From whence

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we may infer, That Christians when they are to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, of which the Paschal Lamb was but a Type or Figure, are much more obliged to pay an Universal Obedience to all the Rules and Precepts of the Gospel.

We read also of the Jews, that if any of them did presume to eat of the Sacrifice of Peace-Offering, which was for a Thanksgiving, with his Uncleanness upon him, *that man was to be cut off from his People.* We must certainly run much ^{20.} greater Danger, if we dare bring our Sins with us to the Holy Table; the Pollutions and Impurity of which, are so foul and abominable in the Eyes of God, that natural or legal Uncleanness, can give but a faint Image or Resemblance of it.

There were several remarkable Judgments befall that People, which St. Paul tells us, were for our example, particularly the Overthrow which God gave them in the Wilderness; the Occasion of which Calamity was, That they had been made Partakers, though obscurely in Types and Figures of the same Sacraments with us. *They were all baptized* ^{1 Cor. 10.} *unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, they* ^{2, 3, 4.}

did all eat the same spiritual meat, they did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ: But because they fell into those heinous Sins of Idolatry, of Fornication, of Lusting after evil things, of Tempting Christ, and of Murmuring, God was so highly displeased as to destroy them; which things are Examples to warn us, that no Favours received from God, are any Privilege or Security to those who abuse them, that he should withhold his Hand from inflicting the severest Judgments upon them; which should make us take heed that we do not trust to, or rely upon the outward receiving of his Holy Sacraments, which are the Seals and Pledges of his greatest Favours, unless we answer the Ends for which they were appointed, in becoming New Creatures, through Faith and a sincere Obedience to his Holy Commandments.

We cannot reflect upon this great Severity which God shew'd to his own People, who lived under so weak and imperfect a Dispensation, and not at the same time conclude, that he has reserved much heavier Judgments for those who enjoy the Means of Grace under the

the Profession of the Gospel, if their Lives are not answerable to them. 'Tis true, such Mens Sins are not always visited in this Life, but yet there are but Two Instances in Scripture of those who profaned the Lord's Supper, who brought their Sins unrepented of to the Holy Table; and their Punishment was such as might terrifie others from following thir Example: *Judas* communicated with our Saviour at the same time when he intended to betray him, but his End was Self-Murder and Despair. The *Corinthians* drank to Excess at the Holy Table, for this many *were weak* ^{1 Cor. 11.} *and sickly amongst them, and many slept*; ^{30.} Diseases and Death were the Reward of their Brutality.

And without doubt, the distress'd Condition of the Universal Church of Christ for many Ages, is in a great Measure owing to the Errors that have been taught concerning this Sacrament, and to the Unworthiness of many who will presume to partake of it.

We ought therefore strictly and impartially to examine our Consciences, to look back with an unfeigned Sorrow upon the Errors we have committed in our Lives and Conversations, that
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by a sincere Repentance and Contrition, we may obtain that Mercy which Christ hath purchased with his Blood, and which in the Feast of his Last Supper, he is ready to seal and deliver to us.

'Tis here that he healeth the broken in Heart, and bindeth up their Wounds; he restores the Conscience to the Favour of God, which is as effectual to its Peace and Safety, as if it were perfectly pure and innocent. But they who have no Remorse upon them for their Sins, who never reflect upon what they have done amiss, or if they do, are neither sorry nor ashamed of it, nor resolve upon Reformation, if yet they will dare to eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup, the Apostle tells us, that *they eat and drink their own damnation.*

Therefore says St. Chrysostom, *Let no Judas resort to this Table, let no covetous Person approach it.* If any be a Disciple let him be present; for Christ said, *I eat my passover with my disciples.*

In the Primitive Church the Deacon was wont to cry out, If any be Holy, let him draw near; and those only who were supposed fit to communicate, were admitted into the Choir, the Place where they celebrated these Holy Mysteries:

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The Door being shut upon the rest, the Publick Penitents, and those who were learning the first Principles of Religion, were not suffer'd to intrude amongst them.

'Tis but Prudence in a Servant to appear as little as he can in his Master's Presence, whilst he knows he is deservedly under his Displeasure. If a Subject be admitted to kiss his Prince's Hand, he is careful not to approach it with unclean Lips, or in any manner that may be offensive or provoking: What Presumption then is it for any of us to come to the Table of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, our King and our Judge, with Hearts full of Pride and Deceit, with Lusts and Passions unsubdued, with wicked Habits of Covetousness, Fornication, Drunkenness and such other odious Sins, with which Men crucifie afresh the Body of their Saviour, and put him to open Shame?

It behoveth him (says St. *Basil*) who comes to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, in Commemoration of him that dyed and rose again for us, not only to be pure from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, least he eat and drink his own Condemnation, but to shew forth evidently

dently the Memory of his Saviour's Death and Resurrection, by dying to Sin and to the World, and by living again to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Men may pretend what they please, but it is impossible for any one really and effectually to remember Christ, if he be not mindful of the Life which he led upon Earth, and of the Obligations we are under to follow his Example: Who can reflect upon the shedding of his Blood, and not be sensible that our Hearts ought to be purged from Sin, and made clean to entertain him? Who with an Eye of Faith can behold the Son of God offer'd up a Sacrifice upon the Cross, as a Lamb without Spot or Blemish, and not resolve to offer up to him his own Soul and Body a living Sacrifice, Pure and Holy, that it may be accepted by him?

Such pious Resolutions every one ought to bring with him to the Holy Table, not only of forsaking all Sin, but of following after Universal Righteousness. But there are Two Duties more peculiarly required to be exercised by us, both in our Preparation for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and at the time

time of our receiving it ; they are Thanksgiving to God, and Charity to our Neighbour.

As to the first, There is no Duty of the Christian Life that does at all Times better become us than this of Thanksgiving. But it is so proper and essential an Employment for us at the Holy Table, that from hence this Sacrament was commonly stiled by the Fathers, the *Eucharist*, or *Feast of Thanksgiving*. They who are backward to praise God for his Goodness at the Time when they are commemorating the greatest Instance of it, the Sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. When Christ is as it were before their Eyes so evidently set forth crucify'd amongst them, when or where can it be suppos'd that they will be more effectually stirred up to offer their Praises and Thanksgivings to him.

God himself hath declared by the Mouth of *David*, *he that offereth me Thanks and Praise, honoureth me.* But how few are there who offer up to God this Sacrifice with which he is so well pleased ? We read in the Gospel, that Luke 17:1 of Ten Lepers that were cleansed, there was no more than one who returned to give Thanks to God for his Recovery.

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And it is well if there be not a much greater disproportion than that is, in the Number of those who partake of the Eucharist, compared with such as are really and truly thankful, so ignorant are Men of their Spiritual Wants, so regardless of their true Interest; and indeed, they are naturally too easily forgetful of the Mercies and Benefits which God bestows upon them.

And of those who are thankful to all outward Appearance, how few are there whose Lives are answerable to the Gratitude they pretend to. But to honour God with our Lips, if our Hearts are far from him, to praise him with our Tongues, at the same time that we dishonour him by our Actions; what else is it but to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, and to provoke God's heaviest Indignation against us? Let us therefore so behave our selves when we come to the Lord's Table, as those who are truly sensible of the Mercies we commemorate, and of the Benefit we receive by partaking of those holy Mysteries. Let our Thankfulness for them sink deep into our Hearts, that the Truth and Sincerity thereof may at all Times appear in the Fruits of Virtue and Godliness; for the best way of glor-

glorifying God, is by a steady and faithful Obedience to his holy Will.

2dly, *Charity to our Brethren* is another Christian Duty, which we are peculiarly oblig'd to exercise at the Holy Table, in respect of which this Sacrament was anciently call'd *the Feast of Love*. For no one might approach that heavenly Banquet who was at open Variance with his Neighbour, or who bare any secret Grudge or Desire of Revenge in his Heart, who was Envious or Malicious, or of Turbulent Behaviour, or who would not testify according to his Ability, a real Affection for his Brethren, by affording some charitable Relief for the poor Sort, who communicated with him.

Such was the Practice of the Primitive Christians. And what more persuasive Argument can be used to exhort Men to Love and Unity, than that which St. Paul brings from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; *We being many, (says he) are one bread and one body; for all are partakers of one bread.* Whereby is express'd the Communion which we all have with Christ our Head, and the strict Unity there ought to be amongst our selves, since we are all

all of us, but several Members of one and the same Body.

But alaſſ, How little now-a-days is this considered by many who are called Christians? who are no ways concern'd to reconcile themselves to their Brethren whom they have grievously offended, to make Satisfaction where they have done Injuries, or to bring to Repentance those whom they have seduced into Sin; who have no Compassion for the Distressed, no Remorse of Conscience for the ſeveral Breaches of Charity they have been guilty of, by flandering and defaming their Neighbour, by endeavouring to make him odious or ridiculous to the World, by false Reports, and misrepresenting his Words and Actions, *ſtirring up Strife all the day long*, by ſowing Discord amongst Brethren, by aggravating and inflaming every little Pique or Misunderstanding amongst them. Such Men as these, who all their Life-time have gone in the way of Cain, who ſtudy nothing else but Mischief and Revenge, will yet dare to present themselves at the Holy Table, to partake of the Pledges of our Saviour's Love.

But have they no Knowledge, no Awe or Dread of those tremendous Mysteri-
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ries? Do they not consider how improper and unbecoming, not to say how rash and dangerous a thing it is for them to resort to that Feast, where there is no other Entertainment than what upbraids their Wickedness, and will increase the Guilt and Punishment of it. What have they to do with Peace, or with the Signs and Seals of it, who are given to Contention and Debate, and whose only Pleasure it is, to disturb the Quiet and Tranquillity of their Neighbours? Why should the Unmerciful pretend to commemorate the highest Act and Instance of Mercy, or how can he expect to receive the Benefit of it, who is so averse to it himself? Such Absurdities and such Dangers Men run themselves into, by coming to the Table of the Lord, with Habits or Dispositions of Mind, that are contrary to the Nature and Design of it.

But we are advised by the Apostle, to *try and examine* our selves when we resolve to go to this Feast; let us most especially do it upon this Point of *Charity towards our Neighbours*, considering them as the Children and Image of God, the Members of Christ, the Heirs of an heavenly Inheritance. If we have offended,

fended, injured or defrauded any one, this is the time wherein we must endeavour to be reconciled to him, by asking his Forgiveness, or by making Restitution and Satisfaction to the best of our Ability. If we have led any one into Sin or Error, we must study to reclaim and undeceive him, to instruct him in the Truth, and bring him back into the ways of Virtue and Godliness; we must follow Peace and embrace Friendship, and be ready to do all good Offices to the Souls and Bodies of our Brethren, considering their Interest and their Happiness, as if it were our own.

This is properly the Wedding-Garment which every one must provide for himself when he goes to the Holy Table, otherwise he affronts and incenses God, who is the Master of that Heavenly Feast, and he dishonours Christ, the Food and Entertainment of it. He also gives Scandal to the Church, particularly to the Guests there present with him, and he wounds his own Conscience, which will grow thereupon, his perpetual Accuser or Tormentor.

Thus we have seen with what Care and Preparation we ought to come to the Lord's Table, that in order to it,

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we must study to inform our selves aright concerning the Nature of that Sacrament, and the Benefits we are to receive by it; that we are to bring with us to this Heavenly Feast, a lively Faith, a sincere Repentance, and stedfast Resolutions of Amendment of Life; that we must understand the Obligations it lays upon us, to cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, that so whilst we remember the Death and Resurrection of Christ, we may dye with him to Sin, and rise again to Newness of Life. We must especially on this Occasion, express the Sense we have of the great Mercy God has vouchsafed to us in his Son, by devout Praises and Thanksgiving to him, and by all the Ways and Measures of Charity that he has prescrib'd us. So shall we be united to Christ our Head, through Faith in these Holy Mysteries, receiving them to our endless Joy and Comfort: Which God grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE XI.
UPON THE
INCARNATION
OF OUR
Blessed Saviour.

I T I M. iii. 16.

Without Controversie, great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the Flesh.

THE Dignity and Perfection of Man when God first created him, appears from what the Gen. 1.27. Holy Scripture tells us, That *God made him after his own image.* He was of a Superior Order to all other visible Creatures,

tures, endowed like God himself, with Freedom of Will, and a Power of Reasoning and Understanding; and what was still more excellent, his Will was regular and holy, his Understanding clear and without Prejudice, so that he resembled his Maker in all those Attributes in which 'tis possible for any Creature to be like him; such as Wisdom, Truth and Righteousness.

As he was thus perfect in his Nature, so was he no less happy in his outward Condition and Circumstances; God seated him in Paradise, and gave him absolute Power and Dominion over all the Works of his Hands: *All Sheep and Oxen, all the Beasts of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, and Fishes of the Sea, were put in Subjection under his Feet.*

So great was the Favour of God, which our first Parents forfeited by their Disobedience, whereby they brought upon themselves the Reverse of all that Happiness to which they were created, and entail'd the heavy Curse and Misery upon all their Posterity.

This indeed is very mysterious, and seems hardly reconcileable to the natural Notions we have of God's Justice and Goodness, that the Guilt and Pu-

nishment of Sin should not rest only upon those who committed it, but be derived to all who are descended from them; but Experience does in part convince us of the Truth of it, and the Scriptures do so expressly affirm it, that there is no Room left for doubting. St.

Rom. 5.12. *Paul tells us, By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

verse 18. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: So that the Words of David may be spoken of all*

Psal. 14. 1. *Men, without Exception, They are corrupt and become abominable.*

This was Man's wretched State after the Fall; there was no hope of Remedy, no other Prospect before his Eyes but the certainty of Temporal Death, attended with the Fears and Horror of endless Torments after it.

And it must needs have increas'd the Misery of our first Parents, to consider that they had brought all this upon themselves, in exchange for the Favour of God, and a sure Title to eternal Happiness: It must also have been an unconceivable Addition to their Sorrow, if they were truly sensible how they had involved their whole Race, in the same Guilt and Ruin. But

But when Man's Condition was become so deplorable, so desperate to all Appearance, God even then made his gracious Overtures of Peace and Reconciliation. He promises a Messiah, a Saviour and Intercessor, who should appease his Wrath, and satisfie his Justice. *The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.*

This Covenant was afterwards more fully and plainly renew'd with *Abraham*: Gen. 22:18. *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* And in the same Form of Words, it was again repeated and confirm'd to *Isaac*. And for the Encouragement of his People, that they might Gen. 26:4. have the surer Grounds to depend upon God for the Performance of the Covenant which he made with their Fathers, he was pleased still to declare himself more and more positively and particularly concerning it; the nearer it drew to the Time of its Accomplishment, he reveal'd by his Prophets, the very Time and Place, and all other Circumstances of his Birth, his Life, his Death and Resurrection; and whatever else related to Christ as our King and Mediator.

The Prophet *Isaiah* foretold, that *He should be born of a virgin*, and that his Name Isai. 7. 14.

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should be *Emanuel*; the Place of his Birth was exactly describ'd by *Micah*, that it should be in *Bethlehem*, otherwise an unlikely Place, *being little among the thousands of Judah*: Many of the Prophets declar'd, that as to his Earthly Pedigree, he should be of the *house and lineage of David*. It was prophesied by *Daniel*, that all nations and languages should serve him; by *Zechariah*, that he should come in a poor and lowly Condition, riding upon an Ass; by *Malachi*, that he should send *Elias* before him, which is *John the Baptist*. And again by *Zechariah*, that he should be Sold for Thirty Pieces of Silver.

All which particular Circumstances, as they were of great Use to strengthen the Faith, and keep up the Hopes of those who lived before the coming of our Saviour, so to us, who have such undoubted Testimony that they were all fulfil'd in the Person of Christ Jesus, in whom we believe, they are a plain Demonstration that he is the Messiah who was promised to the Fathers; and that he has redeemed the World by expiating the Sins of it, as the same Prophets foretold concerning him.

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'Tis with regard to those Prophesies that the Apostle S. *Paul* tells us, That the Son of God was born *in the Fulness* Gal. 4:4 *of Time*, that is, when all Circumstances concurr'd, and were ready for his Appearance in the Flesh, after such a Manner as God had revealed by his Prophets, he then sent him into the World to be the *Mediator* and mighty Deliverer of his People; A Deliverer much greater than *Moses*, who brought them out of *Egypt*, or than *Saul*, or *Joshua*, or *David*, who fought their Battles, and protected them from their Enemies. The Deliverance which he wrought for us is Spiritual, a Redemption from the Powers of Sin and Satan, from the *Curse and Bondage of the Law*, *into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*.

For this End Christ was born under the Law, he lived in Subjection and Obedience to it, till he had fulfill'd its whole Intent and Design, till all the Types and Prophesies, and every thing relating to the Expiation of Sin, and Salvation of Mankind, were compleat and perfected by him. Such wonderful Condescension of the Son of God, and such infinite Mercy of his heavenly Father towards us, how should it inflame our Affections, and raise in our Hearts the most

most devout Praises and Thanksgivings to him ; especially, if we consider that we were at Enmity with him, when he vouchsafed us all this Grace and Mercy, we were Children of Wrath, obnoxious to everlasting Destruction, when he sent his own Son with the gracious Terms of Peace and Reconciliation.

Rom. 5.

The Apostle tells us, *That God commendeth his Love towards us, in that whilst we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.* And again, *When we were yet without Strength, in due Time Christ died for the ungodly.* No human Act of Love could ever yet rise to so high a Pitch. 'Tis very much if a Man will lay down his Life for his Friend, for one to whom he stands obliged by all the Instances of Kindness and Affection ; but Christ died for us, who had given him the greatest Provocation to be our Enemy ; nay, he even died for those who took away his Life from him.

But notwithstanding the plain Evidence we have from Scripture, by comparing the History of our Saviour Christ, as it is recorded in the Gospel, with the Prophesies of the *Old Testament* concerning him, that *Jesus*, in whom we believe, must of Necessity be that *Messiah* that

that was promised to the Fathers, yet the Jews do still obstinately hold out against so many undeniable Proofs of it. Pride and Prejudice have shut their Eyes against this Truth, they expect their *Messiah* should appear in another manner than our Saviour did, not in the Form of a Servant, meek and lowly, riding upon an Ass, attended with no better a Train than a few ignorant Fishermen, but as a mighty Conqueror, that he should come in great Pomp and Splendor, as *David* prophesied of him, *All Kings shall fall* Psal. 72. *down before him, all Nations shall do him* ^{11.} *Service.*

It cannot enter into their Hearts to conceive, how the Afflictions of Christ, the Poverty, Shame and Affronts he was exposed to, and the cruel, ignominious Death which he suffered, can ever be reconciled with those Characters which the Prophets give of the *Messiah*, that he should be a Victorious Prince, whose Dominion should endure throughout all Ages.

Therefore *Christ crucify'd* (says S. 1 Cor. 1. *Paul*) *is to the Jews a stumbling Block,* ^{23.} *and to the Greeks Foolishness.* The one looks upon it as contrary to the Scriptures, the other as an absurd thing against

gainst all Sense and Reason, that the Saviour of the World, the Redeemer of Mankind, should be used with so much Contempt and Cruelty.

But to us who believe, all this is a manifest Proof and Effect of the Power and Wisdom of God. The Sufferings of Christ are so far from being any ground of Shame to us, that as he thereby purchased our Salvation, so are we obliged openly to confess him, and to own our selves to be the Servants and Disciples of a crucify'd Redeemer. This Christ himself requires of us, be it with never so much Hazard of our Temporal

Mat. 10. 32, 33. Peace and Safety, *Whosoever shall confess me before Men, him will I confess before my Father which is in Heaven, but whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven;* and S. Paul tells us to the same Purpose, *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.*

Rom. 10.
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We have all the Reason in the World to be fully satisfy'd, and throughly settled in this Fundamental Article of our Faith, That *Jesu*s is the true *Messiah*, not only from the Completion of all the ancient Prophesies in him, but likewise

wise from the Testimonies that are given of him in the Gospel. This is he to whom *John the Baptist* pointed, when he said, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World.* The Angel *Gabriel* bore Witness of him, both to the High Priest *Zechariah*, and to the blessed Virgin his Mother. God himself publickly own'd him for his Son by a Voice from Heaven, and by the visible Presence of the holy Spirit, descending in the Bodily Shape of a Dove upon him, and proclaiming, *This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*

'Tis needless to mention the Testimony of Men, after that of God and of his Angels; otherwise we might appeal to the Homage paid him by the Wise Men of the East, who were conducted by a Star to the Place where the young Child lay, or to the Prophesies of *Simeon* and *Anna*, which we meet with in the Gospel, or his own Disciples might be brought to testifie of him, who publickly preach'd this Doctrin to the World, That *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, the Son of the Living God; and were ready to lay down their Lives, and many of them actually did so in Confirmation of the Truth of it.

Luke 2.

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All which Testimonies duly considered and attended to, are a sure Defence and Shield to us against the subtlest Attempts of Men or Devils, that should go about to shake or undermine our Faith: We know, that as God is true, so certain it is that Christ Jesus, who was born of the Virgin *Mary*, by the sole Power and Operation of the holy Spirit, without the help of Man, is the Saviour of the World, the true and Eternal Son of God.

But amongst those who agree in this Truth, there are yet various Opinions concerning his Nature, from whence have sprung innumerable Heresies, and damnable Doctrines, to the great Scandal and Prejudice of the Christian Religion.

It may not therefore be improper or unseasonable in this Place, to shew what the true Notion of Christ is, according to the Judgment of the Church of God, grounded upon the plain Sense and Meaning of the holy Scriptures.

There are Two principal Heresies opposite to the Doctrine of the Church concerning this Matter; one is that of the *Marcionites*, who make the Nature of Christ to be one only, denying that he was born in the Flesh, or that he was perfect

perfect Man, the other that of the *Arians*, who deny him to be perfect God, of the same Nature and Substance with the Father ; against both these we affirm, That Christ has two Natures, the Divine and Human, that he is both perfect God, and perfect Man.

Which Doctrine is either grounded upon evident Proof, and express Declaration of God's Word, or is necessarily inferred from the Historical Account which the Gospel gives us of our Saviour's Life, and also from the End and Purpose of his coming into the World, he could not have finish'd the Work which his Father gave him to do, unless he was truly and perfectly both God and Man.

1st. The Truth of this Doctrine appears from the express Declaration of holy Scripture. S. John tells us, *The Word was made Flesh* ; that is, the Second Person of the Trinity was made Man ; for he tells us, *the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. And S. Paul affirms the same thing, *God sent his own Son in the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*. And again, though he were *in the Form of God, and thought it no Robbery* (no assuming undue Honours to himself) *to be equal with God*, yet

John 1:14.

Ver. 1.

Rom. 8:3.

Phil. 2:6.

yet he took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men, and in the Text he delivers it as the great Mystery of Godliness, that God was manifest in the Flesh. There is (says he) but one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus.

2dly, The two distinct Natures in Christ, the Divine and Human, are as necessarily infer'd from the Historical Account we have of his Life and Actions in the Holy Gospel. That he was perfect Man, endued with a reasonable Soul, appears from the various Passions which he express'd of Grief, Joy, Indignation, Pity, as proper Occasions offered themselves for them ; besides, he reasoned and conversed, and is said to have increased in Wisdom like other Men.

That he had really and truly the Body of a Man, is altogether as evident, from the Properties and Necessities that were common to his, with all other *Ep. John* human Bodies. *Our Hands* (says S. John) *have handled the Word of Life.* And our Saviour, after his Resurrection, appeals to the Senses of S. Thomas, *reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand and thrust it into my Side ; And behold my Hands*

John 20.
27.

Upon the INCARNATION. 209

*Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self, Luke 24.
handle me and see; for a spirit bath not 39.
flesh and bones as ye see me have: And
when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his
hands and his Feet.*

Moreover, he was subject to the same kind of Necessities and Infirmitiess that we our selves are; his Body was capable of being bruised and wounded as ours are; it was nourish'd, refresh'd and supported, as all other living Creatures are, by Food and Sleep; it had Appetites of Thirst and Hunger, and a Sense of Pain; and what is an undeniable Proof of the Manhood of Christ, he suffered Death upon the Cross.

And in this respect he is frequently call'd in Scripture, *the son of man*; and his Descent is derived from *David*, by *Joseph* his reputed Father; and he was really and truly conceiv'd of the Blessed Virgin.

But in respect of the Miracles which he wrought, and that by his own Power, such as casting out Devils, healing those that were sick of the most incurable Diseases, commanding the Winds and the Seas, and walking upon the Waters, he shew'd himself to be as truly God.

And indeed, if he were not so, what horrid Blasphemy had he been justly

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chargeable with, in asserting his Power to forgive Sins. Or, How could he have seen into the most secret Thoughts and Intentions of Mens Hearts? Or, How had it been possible for him to have wrought the greatest of all his Miracles, that of raising himself from the Dead? By which the Apostle tells us, *He was declared to be the son of God, with power.*

But a very few of our Saviour's own Words, will decide all Controversie concerning the Two Natures that are really distinct in him. In St. John's Gospel he tells us, *I and my father are one*; that is, we are the same in Nature, Power and Substance. But in the 14th. of St. John, *My father (says he) is greater than I*; therefore of Necessity there must be a Nature in Christ, in respect whereof, he is inferiour to the Father; otherwise it wou'd be impossible to reconcile these Two Places with one another.

But 3dly, The End and Purpose of our Saviour's coming into the World, did require that one and the same Person should be both God and Man: Had he not been Partaker of both Natures, he could not have been our Mediator and our Saviour; he could not have taken upon him the Sins of Mankind, nor have made Satisfaction

ction to his Father's Justice for them, by undergoing Death for all Men, which is the just Wages and Punishment of Sin.

And there is this unspeakable Advantage to all good Christians, from the *Incarnation* of the Son of God; his taking our Flesh upon him, and carrying it with him into the highest Heavens, raises and enlivens our hopes, and gives us an holy Confidence in him, that he will also take us (if we faithfully serve him) into the same Place whither he himself (the Captain of our Salvation) is gone before, to take Possession of those Mansions, which with the Price of his Blood, he hath purchased for us.

And now that he sitteth on the Right Hand of God, to receive the Prayers of the Faithful, to present their Necessities to his Father, and to intercede with him for them, how great Encouragement does it afford to a devout, humble Soul, to pour out her Complaints before him, and to shew him her Trouble! What Boldness does it give his Servants in their Addresses to him, to consider that he is as truly Man, as we our selves are! that he was once cloathed with our Infirmitie, and must needs therefore have Compassion for us, whilst we labour under them:

He was made like unto us in all things, excepting that he was free from Sin.

But though the Human Nature in Christ was necessary for the performing many Parts of the Office of Mediator, yet it was not sufficient for the whole, it was equally necessary that the Divine Nature should be united in the same Person with it. For a meer Creature, of what Dignity or Excellency soever it were, could never have vanquish'd the Power of Hell, nor have purchased Salvation for us ; it could not have forgiven Sins, nor have justified those that are sincerely Penitent. That which is Dependant upon another for its own Life and Being, cannot be thought able to restore its Fellow-Creature from Death to Life, or to bestow Eternal Life upon it : But these are chief Parts of the Mediator's Office, which Christ was therefore enabled to execute because he was the Son of God, begotten from all Eternity. God own'd him as such by a Voice from Heaven, and declared himself to be Well-pleased in him, that is, fully reconcil'd to Mankind, through his Merits and Mediation.

Thus it appears from Holy Scripture, by comparing the Prophesies of the Old Testament, with the Circumstances concerning

cerning our Saviour in the New, that he is the true Messiah, the Lamb of God which taketh away the Sins of the World. It has also been proved from Scripture, and from the Reason and End of his *Incarnation*, that he is perfect God, as well as perfect Man ; of the same Nature and Substance with the Father, in respect of his God-Head, and of the same Nature with us Men, in respect of the reasonable Soul and Flesh which he took unto him.

But that our Gratitude may be excited as it ought to be towards our Redeemer, to pay him the Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving, of Worship, Adoration and Faithful Obedience, which are most justly due to him, it will be necessary for us, frequently to call to Mind, and reflect upon those wonderful Benefits and Advantages which we receive from his *Incarnation*.

The happy Change which the Son of God, as he was manifested in the Flesh, hath wrought for us, will best appear by looking back upon that wretched State the whole Race of Mankind was in, before his coming into the World, and comparing it with the Blessedness we are now made capable of, if we will submit ourselves to be guided and instructed by him.

This

Eph. 5. 8. This is done by St. Paul; *Ye were once darkness,*
Tit. 3. 3. *but now are ye light in the Lord.* And again, *We*
were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceiv'd,
serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in
malice and envy, hateful, and hating one ano-
ther: But after that the kindness and love of
God our Saviour towards man appear'd, not by
works of Righteousness which we have done, but
according to his mercy he saved us, by the wash-
ing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy
ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through
Jesus Christ our Saviour: That being justified by
his grace, we should be made heirs according to
the hope of eternal life. We have the same
Account of our present and past Condition

1 Pet. 2.24. from St. Peter; *Christ himself bare our sins in*
his own body on the tree, that we being dead to
sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose
stripes ye are healed. For ye were as sheep going
astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and
Bishop of your souls. And at the 9th Verse, He
hath made us a chosen Generation, a royal priest-
hood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye
should shew forth the praises of him who hath call-
ed you out of darkness, into his marvelous light.

The Scriptures do in many Places testifie
to us the unspeakable Mercy of God in his
Son Christ Jesus, that instead of Children of
Wrath, and of Vessels prepared and appoint-
ed to everlasting Destruction, through him,
he hath made us Heirs of his Glory, and all
this, without any Merit on our Part, whilst
we were yet Enemies to him, and had rendred
our selves odious and abominable by our Sins.

But that we may the more fully and clearly
perceive

perceive what Privileges and Benefits have accrued to us, from God's being manifested in our Flesh, let us consider farther what was the *End or Design* which induced him to take our Nature upon him; he could not propose to himself any Honour or Interest by it: As he is God, his Nature is incapable of receiving any Increase of Glory or Happiness. It was therefore purely for our Sakes that he became Man, to deliver us out of the Hands of our Spiritual Enemies, to enlighten our Minds with such Truths as concern our Salvation, to call us to Repentance, and thereupon to reconcile us to his heavenly Father, by paying the Satisfaction which his Justice required for our Sins; to which End he became a Propitiation for them, by offering himself up a Sacrifice upon the Cross. He died that cursed Death, to free us from the Curse of the Law, and make us Heirs of eternal Life. He tells us of himself, *The Son Luke 19. of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. 10.* He invites the weary and heavy laden, to come unto him, promising that he will give them rest. And St. John tells us, *That for this purpose he 1 Joh. 3. 8. was manifested, to destroy the works of the Devil.*

These are the great Ends for which Christ was sent into the World; and as in him God has shewn forth his Mercy and loving Kindness towards us, above all that we could ask or think, so let us sincerely endeavour to make such Returns of Duty and Obedience, as may express the Sense we have of his infinite Goodness, and may best answer the End for which it was intended by our heavenly Father. Let us shew forth his Praises with our Lips, but much more

more in our Lives and Conversations; whilst we confess Christ with our Mouths, let us believe in him and serve him with our Hearts, and glorifie him by the Fruit of good Works. Let us receive him as he is *the Truth*, follow him as he is *the Way*; that so we may be made Partakers of him, who is the Source and Fountain of eternal *Life*.

Let us always be mindful of that Bondage from which Christ has deliver'd us, least if we fall under it again, our Condition should become more desperate than it was before he redeemed us. Let us take heed that our Goodness be not like that of *Ephraim* or of *Judah*,

Hosea 6. 4. which *Goeth away as the morning cloud, or as the early dew*. The Scripture pronounces those only happy, who continue to the End: *Be Rev. 2. 10,* *faithful unto death, (says the Spirit of Christ) and I will give thee a crown of life.*

But if any *Man putteth his hand to the Plough and looketh back*, that is, returns to his former wicked Courses, *he is not fit for the kingdom of god.*

Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and so ye may be well assured, that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. For as God by being manifested in the Flesh, made himself Partaker of our frail, human Nature, so if we imitate the Pattern he hath set us of Purity and Holiness of Life, we shall be Partakers of his Divine Nature: And the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which raised him up from the Dead, will also quicken our Mortal Bodies, and fashion them after the Likeness of his Glorious Body, that so we may Live and Reign with him, to all Eternity.

F I N I S.

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